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— Bill of Rights, Second Amendment to the U.S. Constitution

Before anyone edits the Bill of Rights, the authors would like a word with you:



"No free man shall ever be debarred the use of arms."  
THOMAS JEFFERSON

"Arms in the hands of citizens [may] be used at individual discretion ... in private self-defense."  
JOHN ADAMS

"[The Constitution preserves] the advantage of being armed which Americans possess over the people of almost every other nation ... [where] the governments are afraid to trust the people with arms."  
JAMES MADISON

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THOMAS PAINE

"Laws that forbid the carrying of arms ... disarm only those who are neither inclined nor determined to commit crimes ... Such laws make things worse for the assaulted and better for the assailants; they serve rather to encourage than to prevent homicides, for an unarmed man may be attacked with greater confidence than an armed man."  
THOMAS JEFFERSON, quoting Cesare Beccaria

"A militia, when properly formed, are in fact the people themselves ... and include all men capable of bearing arms ... To preserve liberty it is essential that the whole body of the people always possess arms and be taught alike ... how to use them."  
RICHARD HENRY LEE

"The Constitution shall never be construed ... to prevent the people of the United States who are peaceable citizens from keeping their own arms."  
SAMUEL ADAMS

"I ask, sir, what is the militia? It is the whole people ... To disarm the people is the best and most effectual way to enslave them ..."  
GEORGE MASON

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# COMMAND GUIDANCE

by Robert K. Brown

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## Pentagon Hinders POW/MIA Recovery — Again

What are the boobs and dorks in the Pentagon up to now? Why have they decided to replace Garnett Bell as chief of the U.S. POW/MIA office in Hanoi? Bell, who worked on the issue for 20 years, speaks fluent Vietnamese. His original appointment as chief of the Hanoi office indicated that the United States was serious about resolving the issue of missing POW/MIA's. But then Bell rocked the administrative boat by testifying before the Select Committee on POW/MIA Affairs that we had left about 10 POWs behind.

This infuriated the Vietnamese, who attempted to deny Bell re-entry into Hanoi. Only pressure from several U.S. congressmen forced the Vietnamese to allow Bell's return.

Bell's scheduled replacement is an Army lieutenant colonel who doesn't speak Vietnamese, has no experience in Asia, no background in the POW/MIA issue and no experience as an investigator!

Why would the administration do this? Because this is an election year. Because Bush is in deep shit. Because the POW/MIA issue is the most volatile issue besides abortion. Because the administration wants to totally control the situation through a yes-man who won't make waves, but will do as he is told. The Vietnamese must be laughing their collective ass off over this one.

Fortunately, U.S. senators John Kerry and Bob Smith of the Senate Select Committee voiced their concern in a letter dated 28 February 1992 to Secretary of Defense Richard Cheney noting that " ... these changes are ... presumed ... to be in retaliation ... for his testimony November 6 ... changing Mr. Bell's position now may diminish him in the eyes of the Vietnamese ... and undercut our effectiveness in negotiating for access to prisons and obtaining other cooperation."

They also asked the Department of Defense to explain if this "reorganization" had been scheduled prior to Bell's testimony on 6 November 1991 when he stated we left people behind.

We can expect some mealy-mouthed weaseling from DoD in an effort to cover their asses, i.e., we need someone to supervise Bell who has proven himself over the years, who brings a new perspective to the field, blah, blah, blah. We'll print DoD's reply as soon as we receive it.

What needs to be done is to present the administration with a checklist of things they must do regarding this issue. If Georgie Porgie doesn't respond in a satisfactory, timely manner, we'll make it an election issue. And then he damn well better listen.✘



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## FEATURES



Karens — Page 54

Photo: Eric Micheletti

### SOF EXCLUSIVE: SALVO GRENADE MYSTERY

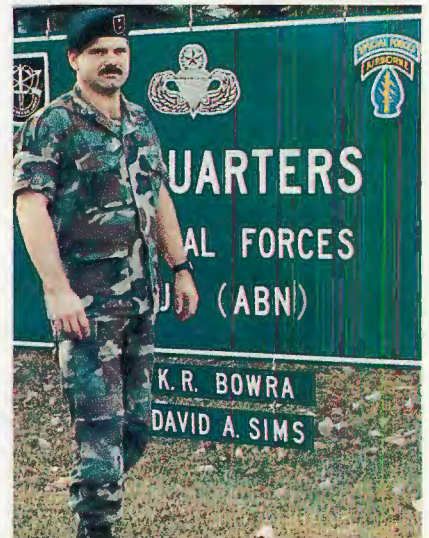
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Bulldog Balwanz — Page 32 Photo: Dale B. Cooper

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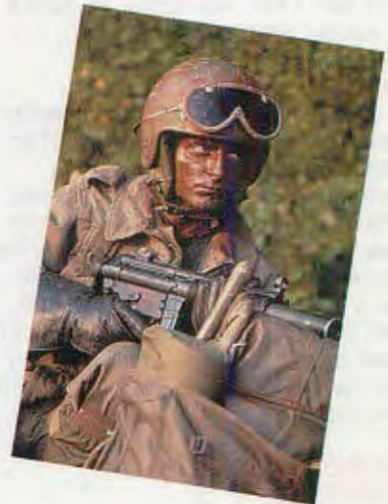
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**COVER**

Horses, sabers and dashing uniforms may be long gone, but the spirit of the cavalry is still alive in France's 13th Regiment *Dragon Parachutistes*. Here, trooper armed with suppressed MP5SD submachine gun rides into action on experimental P-4 light reconnaissance vehicle. Story on page 42. Photo: Eric Micheletti

Dragoon Scouts — Page 42

Photo: Eric Micheletti



# BULLETIN BOARD

## TYPO GREMLIN STRIKES ...

Recently in our March issue, "Command Guidance" by Robert K. Brown dealt with the importance of NRA members voting in the NRA Board Elections, and the significance of placing or retaining federal legislators on the board, as these are pro-gun men who understand the political process on Capitol Hill. In particular, we stressed the importance of backing the Honorable John D. Dingell. The endorsement stands — and this is the correct spelling of his name.

## SHARKHUNTERS — EUROPE '92 ...

"Sharkhunters" multinational submarine historical organization will host their annual convention in Europe this year. This get-together offers sub-buffs tours of the bases at Brest and Lorient in France, as well as several bases in Germany. The September convention also includes walk-throughs of two World War II German U-boats. For more info, contact Harry Cooper at P.O. Box 1539, Hernando, FL 32642, or phone: (904) 637-2917.

## PHREE PHONDA PHONE ...

Jane Fonda fans will be pleased to know that through the wonders of an 800 number, you can contact her companies and *she'll* pay for the call. The Jane Fonda Workout Co. can be reached at 800-662-0109, or if you are interested in the *Jane Fonda Lower Body Step System* you can dial 800-348-5890. If you don't get to speak to Jane on your first call, you'll probably just have to call again. And Again. And one more time ...

## SPECOPS HISTORIAN NEEDS HELP ...

SOG, SEAL, PRU, Phoenix, Force Recon, or Green Beret vets of Vietnam, take note: A researcher needs diaries, letters, photos and recollections of your special operations experiences for a book to illuminate the shrouded exploits and sacrifices of those who fought under a cloak of secrecy. Contact: William Craig, 8 Washington Ave., Westport, CT 06880; phone: 203-227-5725.



SOF Correspondent John Evans writes us from Moscow "... good place for shopping, with about 100 rubles to the dollar ... \$5 buys a fur hat, \$10 gets you a greatcoat, and 200 Marlboros — a colonel's outfit ... was quoted \$100 for an AK-47; same guy said he could get mines, grenades, RPGs ... last night was spent with retired Soviet colonel [who] thinks answer to present crime wave is to arm all civilians — damn hard to think this man has been my enemy ..."

## GOOD NEWS RE: THE NEWS ...

Maybe you noticed the good coverage of the biathlon events from the Winter Olympics on CBS. And maybe you noticed the first NRA ad starring Gerald McRaney on CBS promoting the U.S. Shooting Team on 20 February. It's something of a landmark, and the NRA has a good shot at convincing NBC to also cover the Summer Olympics' shooting events, as NBC is the network of the 1992 Summer Games. Write: Mr. Pierson Mapes, President, NBC TV, 30 Rocker Plaza, New York, NY 10012, and give NBC some encouragement to cover the shooters representing our country — and millions of fellow American shooters.

## DESERT SHIELD/STORM ASSOCIATION ...

Held its first annual reunion in Beaumont, Texas, 9-15 March 1992. The Operation Desert Shield/Desert Storm Association was formed in November 1990 to support Desert Shield

personnel and their families, and today is one of the few remaining Desert Shield/Storm organizations — it may well be the only one that paid all its expenses from members' own pockets without soliciting funds. If you or your family were participants in operations Desert Shield or Desert Storm, you can contact Vic Silvester at O.D.S.A., P.O. Box 1712, Odessa, TX 79760; phone: (915) 367-8989. Vic can fill you in on what O.D.S.A. is all about, and provide information on joining or forming a local chapter.

## NEW MIA NEWSLETTER ...

Is being published by Vietnam Veterans For America, 480 Broadway, P.O. Box 58, Norwood, NJ 07648-1303. Write them for a free copy. They say they hope not many printings will be necessary, and we agree.

## NOT A LITTLE BIRD ... NOT A PLANE ... IT'S A BLACKHAWK ...

A sharp-eyed reader noted that the photo caption for pages 42-43 of SOF's March 1992 issue identified the aircraft in the upper right corner as a "Little Bird" (AH-6G), when indeed it was a Blackhawk.

## SPEAKING OF PHOTOS ...

Photos are important to SOF, as they are an integral part of the stories we publish. Stories submitted should always have photos included. Black and white 5x7-inch prints or color slides are best — although we can work with whatever we have (any photos are better than *no* photos).

Each print and each slide should have the name and address of its owner on it (do not write on the back of prints with a ballpoint pen — use a felt marker, rubber stamp, address sticker, etc.). Also, every photo should be accompanied by a caption telling *who* is in the picture, *what's* going on, *where* and *when* it was taken, and *who* took it. SOF is understaffed and overworked; we handle a *lot* of photos — if your photos are marked and described as above, it assures smoother sailing here, and ensures that you will get them back. *Thanks!*



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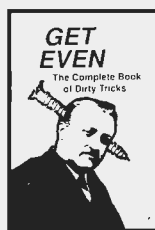
**AMBUSH!**  
Navy SEALs in Deadly Action  
The most deadly terror tactic of U.S. Navy SEALs in Vietnam was the ambush. This instructional video on the art of the ambush features all-new, never-before-seen footage from the personal archives of SEAL vets. Find out what it was like to conduct "wham and scam" ops, unconventional methods used only by SEALs, the difference between planned vs. hasty ambushes and much more. Color, approx. 60 min., VHS only. **\$29.95**



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### GLOCK

The New Wave in Combat Handguns  
by Peter Alan Kasler

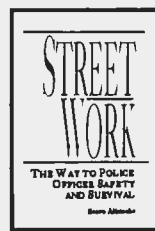
This book debunks the myths, lays to rest the rumors and, through photos of a special cutaway Glock that clearly display its unique inner mechanisms, demystifies the design and operations of what is surely the most innovative handgun introduced in some time - and possibly in the history of handguns. 5 1/2 x 8 1/2, hardcover, photos, illus., 304 pp. **\$25.00**



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by Evan Marshall and Ed Sanow

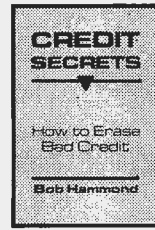
Dramatic first-hand accounts of the results of handgun rounds fired into criminals by cops, storeowners, cabbies and others are the heart and soul of this long-awaited book. This is the definitive methodology for predicting the stopping power of handgun loads, the first to take into account what really happens when a bullet meets a man. 8 1/2 x 11, hardcover, photos, 240 pp. **\$39.95**



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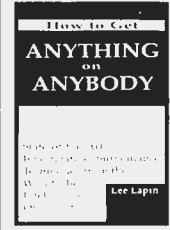
A graphic demonstration of how to exploit the vulnerable vital points of the human anatomy. The instructors - bouncers in some of the most violent bars and roachhouses in the country - focus on strikes that they know from experience will put a man down. Some of the techniques in this video are only appropriate for life-or-death situations. Therefore, this film is for information purposes only. Color, approx. 50 min., VHS only. **\$29.95**



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**FED WORKERS FUNDING TERRORISM VIA PAYROLL DEDUCTIONS? ...**

Federal employees are encouraged to donate to charity through the Combined Federal Campaign (CFC), which takes automatic payroll deductions from federal workers and divvies them up among participating charities. Good idea, as outfits such as the American Heart Association, the Wildlife Society and so forth get funds they can use directly on lifesaving biomedical research, essential consumer-product safety testing, breeding of endangered species, wildlife conservation and so forth — without having to waste any of it on direct-mail or costly media advertising. The CFC issues a "Catalog of Caring," listing the various worthwhile charities that benefit by this largess from federal workers.

Unfortunately, it also lists some less-than-worthwhile "charities" — groups that work at cross-purposes to those organizations involved in lifesaving research to find cures for AIDS, diabetes, alzheimer's disease and cancer. Indeed, in addition to hampering biomedical research, one such group actually aids and abets — if not in fact sponsoring — terrorist bombings and arson costing consumers an estimated \$1 billion per year.

Such a group is People for the



Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), which describes itself in the CFC catalog as worthy of a federal employee's charity dollars because it is a group promoting "a humane lifestyle as a way to obtain a healthier, peaceful, non-violent world."

*Bullshit!* PETA is a rabid animal-

rights extremist group promoting a virulent anti-human philosophy. The organization actively campaigns to abolish all medical research using animals — research that holds the key to saving millions of human lives, including studies carried out by other charities in the CFC catalog.

# YOU PUT YOUR LIFE ON THE LINE FOR THEIR FREEDOMS. NOW PUT YOUR NAME ON THE LINE FOR YOURS.

While you were fighting Saddam Hussein's brutal assault on freedom, some politicians back home fought to severely restrict your Second Amendment right to own a firearm. And though the guns are silent in the Mideast today, the fight for your most basic freedom rages on in Washington.

Join the National Rifle Association of America today to safeguard freedom's ultimate guarantee: your right to keep and bear arms.

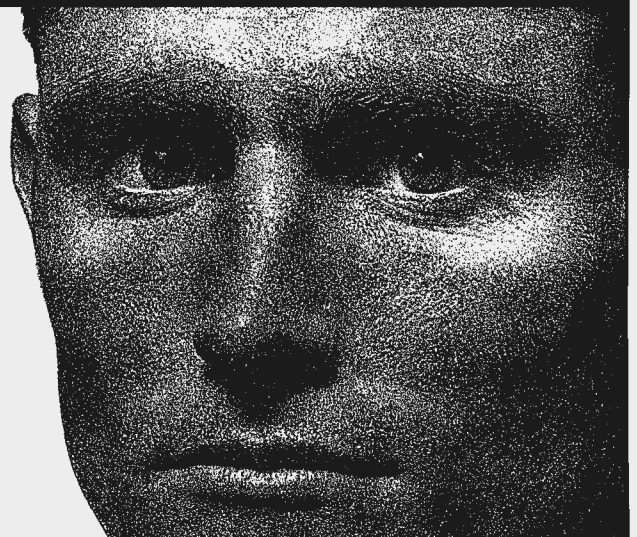
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Civilian Service in Desert Storm—awarded by the US Department of Defense to all civilians who served in the Gulf during Operation Desert Storm/Desert Shield.

Choose:	Item #	Price
Full Size Medal	MM-293	\$19.95
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Ribbon, full size	RI-294	1.25
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Liberation of Kuwait—awarded by the government of Saudi Arabia to all military personnel who served in the Gulf during Operation Desert Storm/Desert Shield.

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Full Size Medal	MM-295	24.95
Mini Medal	MM-296	18.95
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*Just Approved!*



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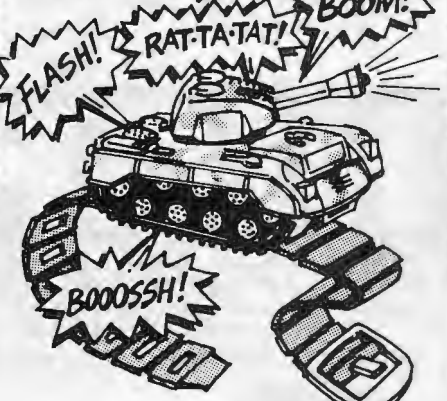
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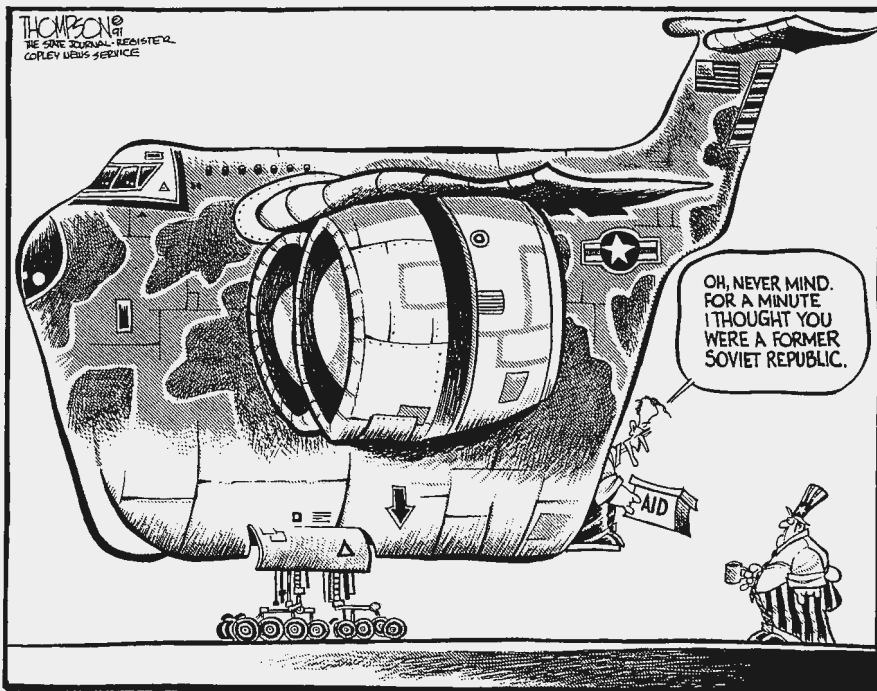
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Item #R-330 ..... \$31.95.  
 Large Size (58 MM lens)  
Item #R-335 ..... \$34.95.





efficiently spend their charity dollars, it's a different story. And that's not the worst part.

PETA has repeatedly been linked to and has aided the Animal Liberation Front (ALF), a group characterized by Scotland Yard and the FBI as terrorists pure and simple. ALF's arson and bombings now cost consumers the aforementioned \$1 billion annually.

While PETA has distributed ALF press releases and videos, Newkirk and other PETA leaders have served as spokespersons for ALF. PETA President Alex Pacheco has actually defended ALF arson, burglary and destruction of property as "acceptable crimes."

Somebody at the CFC has messed up. Federal employees should not be led unwittingly to give their money to any group seeking to destroy the crucial research, conservation and human-rights efforts of the other CFC-aided charities, nor to any group supporting crime and terrorism — especially an anti-human cult like PETA.

To contact the CFC, write: Mr. Frank Marschand, Director, Combined Federal Campaign, 2100 M Street N.W., Lower Lobby, Washington, DC 20037-1298

Thanks to Kathleen Marquardt, Chairman of Putting People First, for relaying this information. ✕

Ingrid Newkirk, PETA's national director, once said that even if biomedical research should produce a cure for AIDS, "we'd be against it ... it's immoral even if it's essential ... even painless research is *speciesism* ..."

Now, SOF would go to war in a New

York minute to defend these bent-heads' rights to pursue their wacko philosophy even if they think, as Newkirk puts it, "a rat is a pig, is a dog is a boy." But when such a wormy outfit flies under false colors into a program designed to help federal employees

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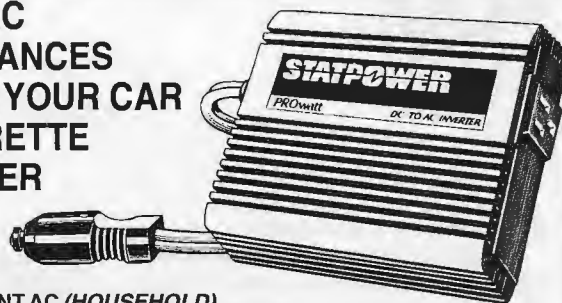
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Telephone tap detector notifies you of unauthorized intrusion onto your line. Just plug modular phone into tiny BUG BOX, then plug BUG BOX into wall jack. An indicator light tells you when someone is "listening in". BONUS: Attach BUG BOX to every phone in your house, then you, AND ONLY YOU, can access the phone. BUG BOX not only tells you if someone else is on the line, it KEEPS THEM OFF with its privacy shut-out circuit. Buy one BUG BOX and use its indicator light to monitor line intrusion; buy as many BUG BOX's as you have phones and enjoy total privacy shut-out plus visible light indicators. Sale price \$30.00

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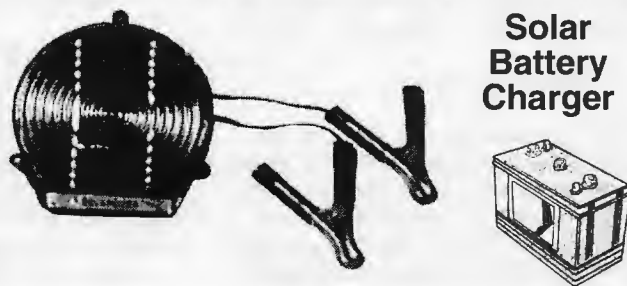


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## ACCURACY VS. CALIBER ...

I was reading an article a few weeks ago that said the military was thinking of rearming its SOFs (Rangers, Seals, Delta) with a new high-capacity double action .45 auto.

My question is why? They stated that the .45 is the best caliber for body shots, which I do agree with, but with the readily available body armor, I think training to take head shots where caliber is less important would be more practical. If the SOFs are well trained this shouldn't be so big a problem.

I know men like Peter Kokalis and Jeff Cooper would disagree, but if I'm not mistaken, the SAS have done very well with Browning Hi-Powers. I have also read where the SAS has looked into replacing them with the SIG P-226, not the Death Ray .45.

I think that tactics and accuracy are more important than caliber. I would be very interested in hearing your opinion.

G.N.

Ashland, Kentucky

*As hand-held nuclear devices are generally not issued to personnel at my level, the closest I have ever come to firing a "death ray" on the battlefield was a Hispano-Suiza 20mm automatic cannon loaded with armor-piercing in-*

*centenary (API) rounds. No handgun cartridge will guarantee instant incapacitation, but since the .45 has the potential to make the biggest hole and destroy the most tissue, it remains the best choice when there is no viable alternative to a pistol.*

*Body armor is by no means ubiquitous. Even where it is available, troops (especially in Third World armies in tropical regions) will commonly eschew it, as military versions are heavy and stifling. No matter how much you practice, under the stress of combat aiming at the torso will provide higher hit probability on a bobbing and weaving target (who is shooting back at you) than a shot to the head.*

*When stripped of their mystique, elite units such as the SAS are most often dreadfully ordinary shots.*

Peter G. Kokalis  
Technical Editor

## FORMER SOVIET OFFICER WANTS WORK ...

I am a former officer of the Soviet army and now I would like to serve in a foreign army. My military rank was senior lieutenant and I have good experience in military service (six months in Afghanistan).

I have been living in Israel for six

months. I have a foreign passport and I am ready to move from here at any time. Would you be so kind to assist me in this?

Alexei Astrein  
Rishon-Le-Zion, Israel

*Most countries, including the United States, accept only their own nationals or permanent resident aliens into their armed forces. An exception is the French Foreign Legion. The address for information is: S.I.H.L.E., Boite Postale 78, 13673 Aubagne, France. The Legion requires all enlistees, whatever their prior military rank and experience, to start at the bottom with their version of recruit basic training.*

## WANTS TO FLY ...

I fly the A-10 close air support fighter for the 104TFG Massachusetts Air National Guard and am an avid reader of *Soldier Of Fortune*. I am looking for additional opportunities that would appreciate my flying skills.

I was moved by your editorial in February 1992, where you discussed the Karens in Burma being pounded by Chinese bombers. Are the Karens looking for fighter pilots to counter these bombers? There seems to be a need for skilled pilots in Central America as well. Would you be able to refer me to people or agencies who would be interested in my abilities? I am willing to temporarily relocate anywhere in the world.

Name Withheld  
Hartford, Connecticut

*Sorry, the Karens don't even have ground-to-air missiles, much less aircraft. All military aircraft in Central America are flown by indigenous pilots. You might want to try to sign on with the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration.*

## CALIFORNIA FELONS ...

Here in the People's Republic of California, the vast majority of gun owners are not registering their semi-automatic weapons. Since the law was passed, about 14,000 people have registered their guns. The other 186,000—286,000 have not and do not intend to now or ever.

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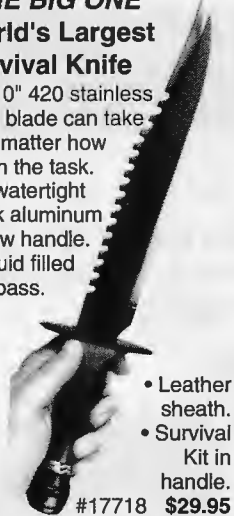
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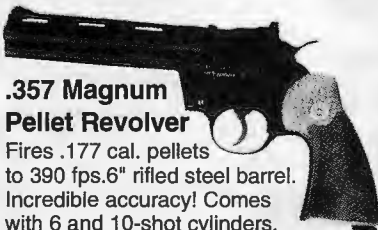
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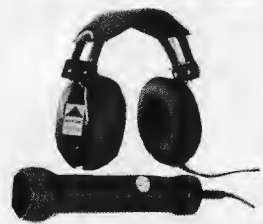
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eral had to extend the registration time another three months.

Your weapons caching article was right on target and of great use to us here in California.

Name and Address Withheld

**UNARMED BRITS ...**

I have read in *SOF* that U.S. soldiers are not allowed to carry loaded weapons, even in combat.

Don't feel so bad. I was a member of the Royal Army and we suffered from a

similar fear. When the 2nd Para's base at Turn Hill was bombed by the PIRA [Provisional Irish Republican Army], the guard at the gate saw the fleeing terrorists, but because he was carrying his magazine in his jacket pocket, they were long gone by the time he got a shot off.

After this bombing, the guards at my own base were allowed to carry weapons, but they had to be carried unloaded with a magazine in the pouch or pocket. One night, one of the guards

lost his magazine (with 10 rounds) and after an extensive search it was decided that guards would no longer be allowed to carry weapons because it was "too dangerous."

The PIRA, unimpressed by this logic, continued bombing and killing everyone in their way.

Steven W. Kendrick  
Fort Lauderdale, Florida

**IRA FAN ...**

What is your gripe with the Irish Republican Army? I am ex-Marine Recon and SEAL and have just returned from working with these great and terrific freedom fighters. They are our kind of people — no commies, no terrorists. That line is pure Brit bullshit and propaganda. You seem to have fallen for the Brit B.S.

The only thing keeping the Brits from being put to the wall by the IRA is electronic surveillance. Man to man they have no match; the IRA are the best I have seen.

Wake up on this. You are asleep at the wheel.

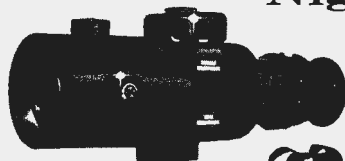
R. Stone  
Queens, New York

**HIRE GUN-CONTROL EXPERTS ...**

I think it's a great idea to hire Soviet nuclear scientists so they don't peddle their expertise to terrorist governments, but why stop there?

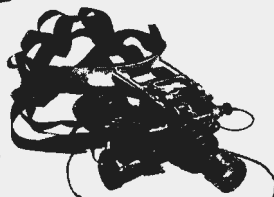
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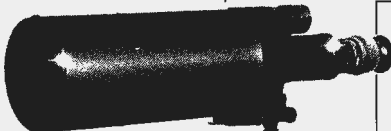
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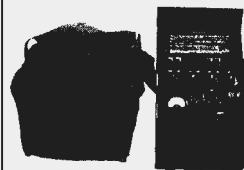
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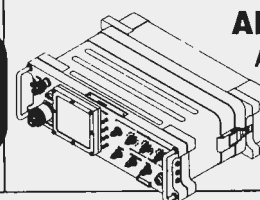
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Michael A. Pacer  
Glendora, California

### **SEXIST BIGOTRY OR TELLING IT LIKE IT IS? ...**

Concerning First Sergeant Charles W. Sasser's article, "Women in Combat?" [SOF March 1992] — conditions such as he described do occur in mixed-gender units ... or at least in those mixed-gender units that suffer from poor motivation, poor discipline, low morale and bad leadership.

The sergeant is highly selective in the incidents he uses to condemn women warriors. Yes, some female soldiers, active and reserve, froze up upon receiving their orders to the Gulf. So did some of the men. In Seattle, a whole church full of servicemen caught a bad case of conscientious objection upon realizing they were going to war. Then there was an entire National

Guard brigade that went over the hill for the weekend when they felt that they were being "worked too hard."

The sergeant overlooked the actions of other female personnel:

The female artillery officer who, realizing that her Patriot battery area had been targeted by a Scud attack, ordered her personnel into their bunkers while she and a single NCO stayed on in the fire control van to engage and destroy the strike.

The female pilots and crewwomen of the aviation brigades who flew their unarmed transport helicopters hundreds of miles into Iraqi territory in the 101st Airmobile's drive to the Euphrates River.

The female aircrew personnel aboard the Air Force's transport and tanker fleet who racked up thousands of flight hours to maintain the air bridge to Saudi Arabia.

It's 1992, Sergeant. The day of the snake eater is passing and the techno-warriors of the 21st century are taking over. Go take your obsolete chauvinistic attitudes to the nearest military museum and hang them up between the Brown Bess muskets and the cavalry sabers.

James H. Cobb  
Tacoma, Washington

As a senior non-commissioned officer with 21 years of service in the regular army, I find this article to be a slanted, slanderous embarrassment to any dedicated fair leader who endeavors to conduct him/herself in a professional manner.

I feel that the problems that 1st Sgt. Sasser and the commander encountered were a direct result of his attitude of sexual bias. There were numerous times in the article that this man allowed unprofessional comments to go uncorrected, thereby creating an atmosphere of permissiveness. There seemed to be no attempt by any member of the chain of command to provide any fair or moral guidance to the soldiers at all. Instead there seemed to be a mindset of "boys will be boys, but these women are all sluts."

With all the experience this man claims to have, it seems a shame that somewhere along the line he didn't learn how to lead in a better manner.

Larry G. Crowder  
Fort Campbell, Kentucky

Having spent 13 years as a U.S. Air Force jet-engine mechanic, I found 1st Sgt. Sasser's "Women in Combat" to be close to the truth as I saw it. Women

*Continued on page 75*

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# COMBAT CRAFT

by Colonel Alex M. S. McColl

## SOG Equipment Checklist

In the summer of 1968, I was involved in setting up a Recon Team (RT) leaders' school for OP-35 of MACVSOG (Military Assistance Command Vietnam, Studies and Observations Group) at Long Thanh in what was then the Republic of Vietnam.

The OP-35 RTs conducted reconnaissance and small-scale raiding operations in the "denied" areas along the border between Vietnam and Laos. They were fairly close to the top of the scale in the business of going into odd and nasty places and doing odd and nasty things and, mostly, making it out alive. James Pruitt wrote a very lightly fictionalized chronicle of their doings called *Striker One Down*; read it, especially if you're interested in finding out all the different ways you could get killed on a SOG RT mission.

The document reprinted here was a

student handout at the SOG RT leaders' course. It represents the then-"state of the art" professional opinion on what to take when going out and looking for industrial-strength trouble, which was the basic job of a SOG RT. It is offered first as a historical document and something of a tribute to the incredibly brave men who made up the SOG RTs, and second, for information and "such action as may be deemed appropriate" by those who may find themselves assigned to similar missions.

Two points to keep in mind while using this list: First, this was written more than 20 years ago; there have been improvements, especially in radio equipment. Second, this is rather specifically tailored for operations in a non-swampy wet-tropic hilly environment. For arctic, high-mountain, desert

or other environments, appropriate modifications would be called for. Given the above, it's still a damn good starting point for making changes.

### Individual Equipment

Each team member should normally carry the following items:

- Sterile fatigues or camouflage suit
- Flop-brim hat with portion of fluorescent panel sewn inside top
- Jungle boots
- Pistol belt
- Harness
- First aid packet
- Pill kit (antibiotics, pain killers, etc.)
- Knife (heavy and sharp)
- Four canteens with purification tablets attached
- Smoke (at least one of every color listed in the SOI [Signal Operation Instructions])



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- Individual weapon
- Signal mirror
- Fluorescent orange panel
- Strobe light
- Pen-flare gun with four to six flares
- Four to six ammo pouches (canteen covers may be substituted)
- Rucksack with reinforced straps
- Rations
- Weapon cleaning equipment
- Maps
- Poncho
- Can opener (or pocket knife with can opener)
- Waterproof matches
- Insect and leech repellents
- Jungle sweater (optional)
- RT-10 radio, or equivalent
- Penlight
- 6-foot length of nylon cord (e.g., suspension cord, 550 cord)
- Swiss seat
- Two snap links
- Notebook and pencil
- Two plastic bags at least 1-foot square each
- Fragmentation grenades (WP or gas can be substituted)
- Two OD cravat bandages
- SOI and KAC (Signal Operating Instructions and field codes)
- Gloves



Marines of 2nd Battalion, 9th Marines on Operation Dewey Canyon northwest of A Shau Valley, Vietnam, February 1969. Recon teams and rifle patrols both have only what they bring. Photo: DoD

- Extra socks
- Claymore
- Serum albumin unit

#### Team Equipment

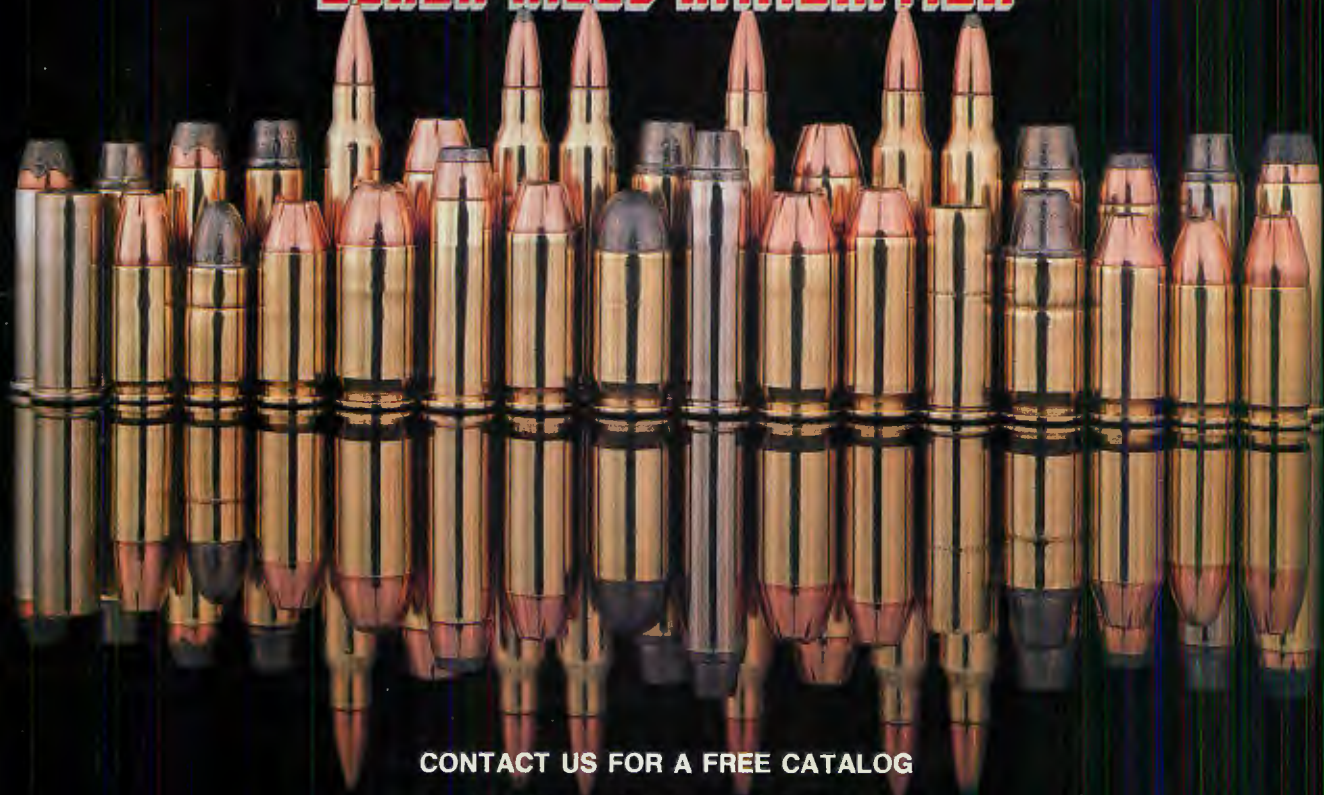
One of each of the following items of equipment should normally be carried on a team:

- Camera and film
- Binoculars
- AN/PRC-25 (or equivalent) with extra battery

- M79 with assorted types of ammunition
- M14 mines, and booby traps as required
- Anti-intrusion devices as required

*Special equipment such as wiretap devices, night-vision equipment, equipment for prisoner snatches, demolition supplies, etc., are carried as the mission requires.* ✕

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# WORLD SITREP

3

## BOTSWANA

One company of U.S. 3/325th Parachute Regiment deployed to Botswana from Italy for joint exercises ...

2

## ARMENIA

Group takes two former Soviet generals hostage to protest removal of 14 helicopters from republic ...

1

## ALGERIA

Military units still deployed, more than 500 Islamic Salvation Front members arrested; Mohamed Boudiaf chairs High Security Council — Defense Minister Khaled Nezzar is power behind throne ...

4

## BURMA

Government forces launch major offensive against Karen stronghold at Manerplaw, using two 7,000-man divisions; meanwhile, leader of Student Democratic Front says rebel groups are uniting for an offensive that could topple government ...

5

## CAMBODIA

U.N. team of 1,090 personnel begins work clearing thousands of land mines from battle zones, in program expected to cost \$25 million ... Heavy fighting between Khmer Rouge and government troops ...

6

## CHAD

Approximately 150 French paras leaving after Chadian defeat of rebel invaders at Bol and Liwa ...

7

## CONGO

Military deposes civilian transitional government of Prime Minister Milongo, calling it incompetent, and charging it with trying to separate military from people ...

8

## FRANCE

Is combining special operations units of the three armed services and also the *Gendarmerie* national police under a single command ...

9

## GUATEMALA

President Serrano meets with URNG rebels in Mexico City, saying he is ready to sign peace treaty, discuss rebel positions ...

10

## HUNGARY

Charges Yugoslavia has placed antitank mines along border with Hungary ...

12

## IRAQ

U.N. inspectors now estimate Iraq could have built four nuclear bombs per year with recently discovered, sophisticated centrifuge uranium-enrichment equipment ... Iraq has set up arms manufacturing/procurement center in Tunisia to confound U.N. monitors of its chemical and nuclear arms programs ...

13

## JAPAN

Announces it will link foreign aid to nuclear non-proliferation and arms control ... *Defense Daily* reports Japan plans to buy large quantities of plutonium over the next two decades, possibly indicating plans to build a significant number of nuclear weapons ...

11

## IRAN

Plans to buy more than \$1 billion in arms from former Soviet republics this year; similar amount sold to Iran in 1991, slightly less in 1990 ...

14

## LEBANON

End of January was deadline for all civilians to turn in unlicensed weapons, before army begins search of entire country ... *Hezbollah* roadside bomb kills two soldiers; Israeli gunships kill *Hezbollah* leader and attack positions near Loueizeh and Milkh ...





**28****YUGOSLAVIA**

Cease-fire holding, with violations ... In referendum, 99.9% of Albanians in Macedonia vote to transfer their territory to Albania ... Over Serbian objections, Bosnia-Herzegovina authorizes referendum on independence ... British papers publish "secret report by unidentified agency" charging that Serbian-controlled federal army and Serbian ethnic militias cooperated in campaign of looting, terror, atrocities and murder in occupied sections of Croatia; Helsinki Watch reports Serbians have committed hundreds of atrocities, are responsible for "disappearance" of more than 5,000 people ...

**27****SUDAN**

New hotbed of Iranian activity, with between 1,000 and 2,000 military advisers training Sudanese army and security personnel; in addition, at least 12 training camps have been set up in the past few months, where Islamic extremist militants from Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt and the Persian Gulf region are being trained for subversive activities ...

**26****SRI LANKA**

Major government offensive near Trincomalee ... Official government numbers on insurgency for 1991 tally 4,270 LTTE rebels killed, 1,100 soldiers killed ... Government receiving military aid from PRC ...

**25****SPAIN**

Will buy 420 M60 tanks, 100 M113 APCs, 83 M110 203mm self-propelled guns from United States. Treaty-Limited Stocks being withdrawn from Germany — Spain getting favorable price, and NATO pays shipping costs ...

**24****SOMALIA**

Government, rebel troops still contesting control of capital city Mogadishu; five-man U.N. team on site to seek end to conflict ...

**23****RWANDA**

Government troops kill 40 rebels during attacks on two government outposts ...

**22****RUSSIA**

None of 36,000 houses scheduled to be built for former Soviet troops returning from Germany were ready in 1991; many returning troops being stationed along Finnish border — Finns getting nervous ... Former Soviet news agency TASS now called RITA (Russian Information Telegraph Agency) ... Russia plans to RIF 700,000 soldiers this year to cut costs ...

**21****PHILIPPINES**

Will buy 18 Israel Aircraft Industries Kfir fighters for approximately \$144 million, to replace aging F-5A/B fighters ... All U.S. forces scheduled to leave before end of 1992 ...

**20****PERU**

Three U.S. crewmen, indig mechanic killed when UH-1H helicopter crashes while on anti-drug operation in Huallaga Valley ...

**19****NICARAGUA**

Re-contras and re-compas (ex-Sandinista soldiers) began turning in weapons on 22 January, per agreement reached 13 January ...

**15****LIBERIA**

Interim government issues new currency; Rebel Charles Taylor declares anyone in possession of this currency to be guilty of economic sabotage ... Independent NPFL leader Prince Johnson shoots three more of his top military staffers ... Taylor drops roadblocks, thousands flee his areas each day to Monrovia ...

**17****LITHUANIA**

Has requested help from Germany in training staff officers and establishing a military administration ...

**18****MOZAMBIQUE**

Malawi opens border roads to resupply Mozambican cities of Tete and Sofala, per compromise reached 20 January ... Zimbabwean President Mugabe offers to mediate Mozambique/Malawi disputes ...

**16****LIBYA**

Khadafi still has his security forces on "special alert" due to coup attempt ... CIA Director Gates says Libya has stockpiled 40,000 tons of chemical munitions, is shopping for Scuds ...





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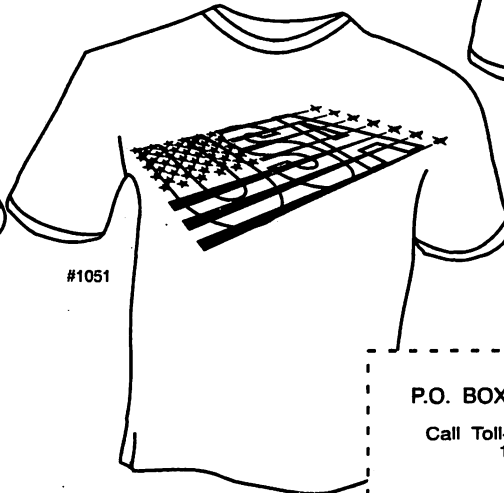




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# BATTLE BLADES

by Greg Walker

## Superbladesmith



The "Shadow 1" from Chris Reeve makes the perfect field mate for Glock's 9mm autoloader. Reeve knives have been extensively tested by Battle Blades editor Greg Walker, who considers them some of the finest field knives available today. Photo: Stuart Wong

**W**orking with knives from Chris Reeve has almost become habit. From the onset of my career as a cutlery writer/evaluator, blades from this South African knife-maker have been part of the standard against which other knives, regardless of category, are compared.

The design, form and function of Reeve knives have first to do with being effective cutting tools. In the beginning, Reeve's clients were primarily members of the South African Defense Forces, with additional blades shipped to the Rhodesian Security Forces when that country still existed. Such knives were meant for the rigors of warfare in the bush, carried and used by men well-versed in the military application of edged weaponry. Reeve now operates in partnership with his wife, Ann, out of Boise, Idaho.

Built from a single billet of A2 tool-and-die steel, a Reeve knife offers immense strength due to its single-unit construction. One needn't worry about bending or snapping a tang, as there is no tang present. The billet's first two stages of shaping are computer controlled, with Reeve finishing each knife by hand once the semifinished blank

reaches his shop. Reeve prefers to hollow grind his blades, feeling such a grind is easier to field-sharpen and is as durable as a flat grind, if done properly.

Tony Tocci, *Fighting Knives* magazine field editor, recently asked custom knifemaker Jimmy Fikes to flat grind the blade on a Reeve knife so it could be fairly compared to a similar knife previously tested. Fikes noted that the Reeve "outperformed the opposition ... it did better than nearly every other knife I've tested in this manner over the years."

In addition to making working knives, Reeve is also noted for his innovative custom patterns and designs. Of these, he is proud to offer a number of blade patterns that include spearpoints (Shadow), clip points (Jeraboam), traditional *tantos* (Sable) and folders (Sebenza). Because he relies on a standardized handle design, each blade pattern can be ground to the owner's preference, with future interchange of models causing merely a blink, as "if you've handled one Reeve knife, you've handled them all."

One of the first production makers to offer an effectively blackened blade (he uses Kalgard, a dry lubricant/coating), Reeve sees many of his blade models going to professional military and law-enforcement personnel. Though a point of individual taste and concern, properly blackened blades do away with possible "sun flash" when the knife is in use.

"It's not so much if you're getting ready to take a guy out," comments one Reeve knife owner, "it's when you're using the knife to cut fields of fire for your static defensive position, or firewood, or if you're skinning out a rabbit in the middle of the day. Enemy observers are trained to look for sun flashes off bare metal surfaces. That's where the concern lies."

In August 1991, a number of Reeve knives were offered for evaluation to a deploying Special Forces team. Expected to conduct three weeks of intensive field training, the team carried these test blades from the moment it hit the ground. Forced marches, live-fire exercises, and night movements over miserable terrain were grouped with barracks chores like scraping carbon-infested weapon parts clean, or cutting various amounts of paracord and cardboard for upcoming training exercises. Three weeks later, the verdict was in.

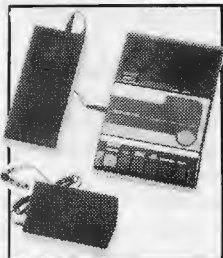
Every knife evaluated received rave reviews. Edges held up despite continuous poundings, with honing accomplished using both stones and man-made devices. The single-piece handle with its metal buttcap was often used as a field hammer, with no adverse results.

Although Reeve knives feature a round handle (which is hollow, for limited emergency storage), no model tested was found to be difficult to position in one's hand at night. This was due to Reeve's 30-degree grip pad with double hilt, a system which immediately brings the thumb and forefinger into line with the guard, as the other three fingers and palm take up the knurled pad.

Doesn't the all-metal handle become too hot to hold in summer heat, or too cold to let go of in midwinter? All handle materials conduct varying amounts of heat, depending upon their individual makeup. For example, a Micarta handle can get just as un-touchable as a metal one if left uncovered in the sun.

During winter deployments, any number of tools/items must be dealt with that are bare metal. Proper protective clothing for such an environment includes gloves, which normally eliminate skin-to-metal contact. During the Gulf War, many soldiers wore finger-

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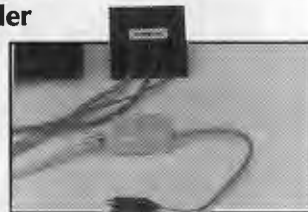
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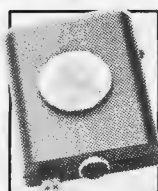
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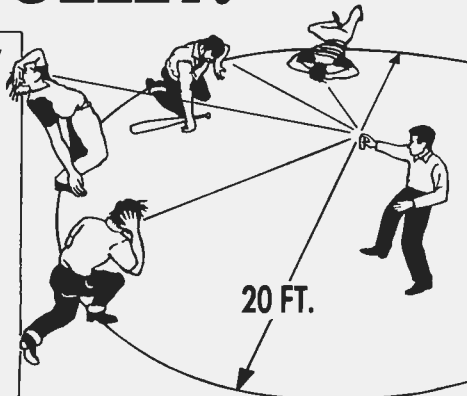
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less leather gloves so they could handle the black synthetic stocks, pistol grips and forearms of their M16A2 rifles. Obviously, the key is to think about where one is, then adapt to that environment.

Reeve uses all-leather black sheathes with a single strap-'n'-snap security system. Reeve believes leather to be the best of all materials where knife carry is concerned, as long as it is properly taken care of.

"Cordura and Nylon sheathes will become 'sloppy' after a year or two of wear," he said. "Hard synthetics, such as Kydex, are quite abrasive to a blade's finish over a period of time. But keep your leather sheath oiled and clean, and it will last for years." In addition, leather sheathes are quiet in the field when bumped or rubbed against the ground or brush.

**Although not a pry bar, this knife can be used as such under emergency circumstances without damage.**

Battle Blades leans toward Reeve spearpoint models such as the "Shadow" series and the new "Project One" line. Featuring an exceptionally durable point format, both models have been shown to perform medium to heavy field chores without damage.

"There is no such thing as a 'reinforced' point," Reeve scoffed. "It's all design, and proper professional grinding." Our "Project One" sample has seen nearly a half-year's work, and it has delivered impressive results.

Using 1/4-inch thick stock, the P-1 was designed by Reeve as a military field knife. Sheathed in a unique scabbard, which uses a hard plastic button to hold the knife in place, this is one hard-core blade for both the hunter and professional bush-buster. Although not a pry bar, this knife can be used as such under emergency circumstances without damage.

Proper heat-treating and hardening of his blades is paramount with Reeve, who uses an in-house Rockwell testing machine to ensure his specs are met. Suggested retail prices for Project One, as well as other knife models in the Reeve line, are available by calling 208-375-0367.

Should you be looking for the highest levels of custom quality in a bench-made knife, look no further than Chris and Ann Reeve. Attention to detail, original design, quality materials and full-service backing are hallmarks of this family-owned business. ✂

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**L**ack of information can be dangerous to you and your gun rights.

If you didn't know that the House version of the "Brady Bill" is different from the Senate version, and that neither has been enacted and signed into law, you haven't been reading *Gun Week*. The general media has not given an accurate description of these measures, nor have they made it clear that the votes they reported were only steps in a long process.

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# Caution: Read Instructions Fully Before Going Behind Enemy Lines.



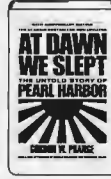
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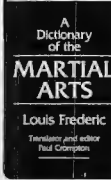


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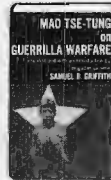
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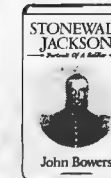
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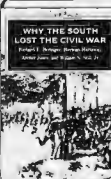
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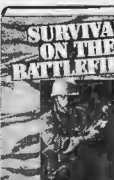
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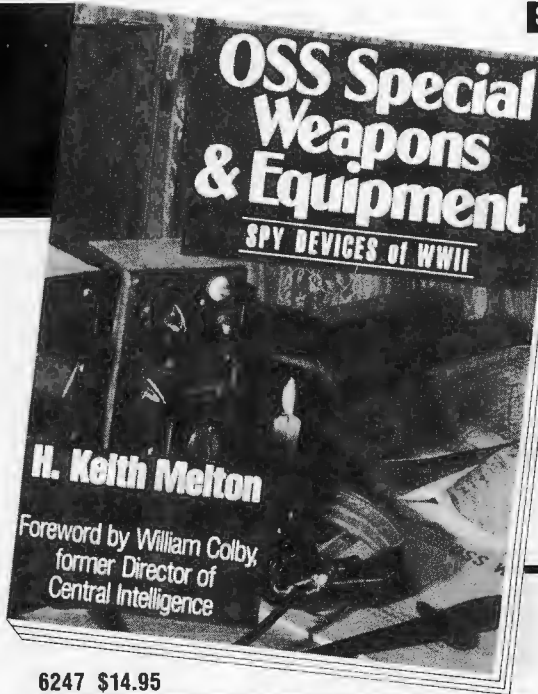
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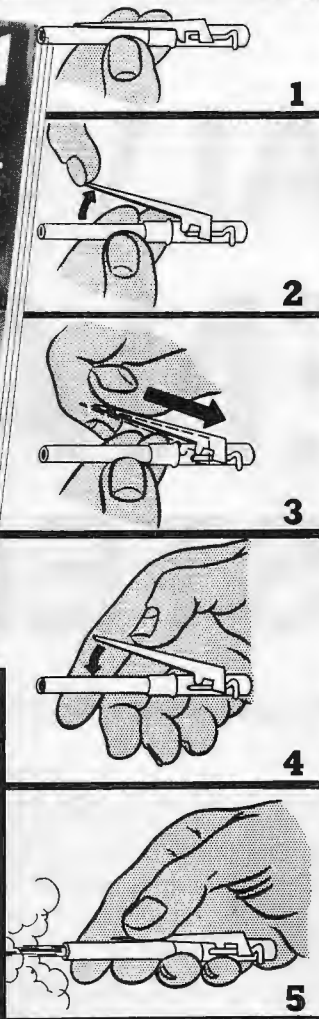
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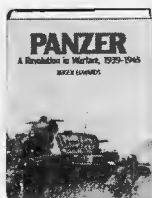
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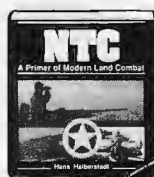
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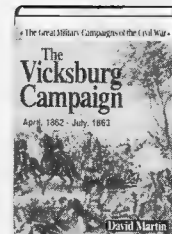
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# SALVO GRENADE MYSTERY

Text & Photos by Peter G. Kokalis

ar is the ultimate test bed. At the expense of 75,000 human lives and untold misery, El Salvador has provided combloc nations with a useful proving ground for a large number of their small arms systems. Not the least of which have been grenades.

In the nine years I have been tramping the battlegrounds of El Salvador, I have encountered crate-loads of Soviet F1, RG-42, RGD-5 and M75 hand grenades, as well as the dangerous Czech RG34 and RG4 impact-detonated grenades. During my last trip I examined two unusual grenades, never described previously in open-source literature, and of uncertain origin.

Before we examine these two new grenades in detail, a brief history of hand grenades is in order. Their first recorded use was at the siege of Arles in 1536. During that era, a grenade (from the Spanish word *granada*, meaning pomegranate) consisted of an earthenware pot filled with black powder and stones, ignited by a piece of slow match. It was used principally for defense of fortifications; as siege warfare declined, so did use of the grenade.

Grenades were revived at the siege of Port Arthur during the Russo-Japanese War of 1904. World War I, with its static trench scenarios, saw the universal adoption and massive use of hand grenades. By 1916, the British were producing more than 1 million grenades per week.

Modern grenades evolved into two principal types, defensive and offensive. Defensive grenades are designed to produce a large number of fragments, which will incapacitate at distances up to 40 meters. Earlier types (such as the U.S.

Mk2, Soviet F1 and British Mills Bomb) have externally serrated cast-iron bodies, which break unevenly into either large chunks or powder-sized particles. Unfortunately, their fuze assemblies and large fragments are often propelled as far as 200 meters from the point of impact. Defensive grenades such as these must be employed from adequate cover.

Offensive grenades are supposedly designed for use by assaulting troops fighting in the open. Featuring heavy-explosive charges with thin walls and little potential to produce large fragments, they depend upon their blast effect to stun or kill the enemy.

In recent years, these distinctions have blurred. If incapacitation can be guaranteed within a 10-meter burst radius, and the danger area limited to a maximum 30 meters, the grenade can be used for both defensive and offensive purposes. For these parameters to be met, the fragments must be extremely small, with high initial velocity (up to 6,000 feet per second) and almost no residual velocity at 30 meters.

Three methods have been used to successfully achieve these results: (a) a pre-notched wire coil inside a thin sheet-metal body (U.S. M26 series); (b) a large number (2,600 to 3,500) of steel balls within a plastic matrix (Soviet M75); and (c) a pre-notched liner or sleeve within a thin sheet-metal body (Soviet RGD-5). This discounts the fuze assembly which, depending upon its construction, can still fly back and embed itself in your forehead.

Hand grenades are encountered in two broad configurations. So-called "stick" grenades are now produced only by Hungary and in the People's Republic of

China. Most common today is a hand-sized fragmentation body filled with the explosive charge, to which is directly attached the fuze assembly. These take several shapes: Spherical ("baseball" or "golf ball"), oval ("egg" or "pineapple"), cylindrical, or combinations of these geometrics.

Most of these grenades use one variation or another of the *Bouchon* (from the World War I era French inventor) or "mousetrap" igniter system. The fuze unit, which usually screws into the grenade body, consists of a detonator tube and a casting with a percussion cap in the center. Hinged to the casting is a spring-powered flap, holding a firing pin that aligns with the percussion cap. A safety lever (sometimes called the "spoon") clips onto a lip on the opposite side of the casting, with the firing-pin flap forced back against its coil spring. The spoon is held in place by a cotter pin, with an attached pull-ring, which passes through a hole in the fuze head casting.

While the cotter pin is removed, the spoon is held by hand against the grenade body. When the grenade is thrown, the coil spring pivots the flap, flipping the safety lever away from the grenade, and driving the firing pin into the percussion cap to ignite the fuze.

Most hand grenade fuzes are designed with a 3- to 5-second delay — time enough to reach the target without permitting your

Disassembled tailboom of what is presumed to be a North Korean rifle grenade shows impact-initiated detonator system, which uses a spring-loaded, needle-sharp firing pin.

opponent to pitch it back at you.

Both of the grenades I uncovered in El Salvador were equipped with the Soviet UZRGM striker-released, pyrotechnic-train delay fuze — a Bouchon-type — which protrudes far above the top of the grenade body and provides a 3.2- to 4.2-second delay. The safety levers of these fuzes were marked with the Cyrillic letters for UZRGM, a production code indicating manufacture in 1987, and the factory code "22" in a double circle.

U.S. government technical intelligence sources have indicated to me that the above code signifies manufacture in Bulgaria. I have no factual documentation to indicate this is true. Also, I cannot confirm that these grenades were originally issued

to that found on Bulgarian and Soviet RGD-5 grenades.

However, closer examination reveals six unexplained longitudinal ridges around the circumference at both ends of its body. The body is marked "RGO-78" (*Ruchnaya Granata Oboronitel'naya* — 78), with a "22" in a double circle. The RGD-5 grenade has a serrated fragmentation liner. Behind its sheet-metal outer skin, the RGO-78 body is lined with thousands of steel balls embedded in a green plastic matrix. Total weight of the RGO-78 is approximately 100 grams more than the RGD-5 (270 grams).

I surmise the RGO-78 to be another example of the current trend toward offensive/defensive combination grenades. The

stripe of unknown significance. Markings on the grenade body include "1-86-10," both a "6" and "23" in pentagrams, and what might be perceived as several small oriental characters.

Another version of this grenade substitutes a rifle-grenade finned tailboom assembly for the UZRGM fuze, by means of a stepped-thread



RGO-78 grenade — behind its sheet-metal outer skin, the body is lined with thousands of steel balls embedded in a green plastic matrix. Presumed origin is Bulgaria.

aluminum interface. Markings on the tailboom include "1-86-10," both a "7" and "4" in pentagrams, "25E" and what might be an oriental character. The igniter on this assembly is impact detonated, with a front-spring-loaded firing pin of hypodermic syringe configuration and sharpness.

Four countries have fielded Kalashnikov rifles in one form or another that accept spigot-type rifle grenades: Poland, Hungary, North Korea and Yugoslavia. There are rumors the former Soviets and possibly Egypt have fielded



Thought to be of North Korean origin, these grenades — captured from FMLN terrorists — feature thousands of steel balls embedded in an aluminum-alloy matrix. They can be employed either as hand grenades when fitted with the combloc UZRGM fuze, or as a rifle grenade when a tailboom assembly is attached.

with UZRGM fuzes, as guerrilla warfare involves a considerable amount of improvising. Furthermore, Bulgaria could well have supplied these fuzes (for example, Russian M75 grenades are usually encountered with Bulgarian-made fuzes) to another country which manufactured the grenade bodies.

At first glance, one of these grenades appears to be nothing more than a slightly modified Soviet RGD-5 antipersonnel hand grenade. Its two-piece, sheet-metal outer skin has a prominent latitudinal crimping seam around its circumference, and the configuration is egg-shaped. The overall length of 118mm is very close to that of the RGD-5. The explosive filler is an unknown charge-weight of TNT. Its olive-drab enamel finish is identical

steel balls probably provide a casualty radius of no more than 5 meters, with a danger-area radius of about 25 meters (although, be advised that the UZRGM fuze assembly can reach out and strike you dead from a distance of almost 200 meters). This grenade was probably manufactured in either Bulgaria or the former Soviet Union.

One version of the second grenade was also fitted with a UZRGM fuze assembly, with markings on its spoon identical to those found on the fuze screwed into the RGO-78. With its fuze assembly attached, the

overall length of this grenade is 128mm. At approximately 570 grams, with the fuze assembly but sans the TNT explosive filler, this egg-shaped hand grenade is quite heavy. Its body consists of thousands of steel balls embedded in an aluminum-alloy matrix. The body has been painted dark green with a single longitudinal white



cup-type rifle grenade systems, although the Soviet army has never been enamored with rifle grenades of any type.

This tailboom will fit over a spigot-type launcher of 20mm diameter. Yugoslav rifle grenades and launchers are of the 22mm-type. This leaves Poland, Hungary or North Korea. Most Polish rifle grenades I have examined are clearly marked either "PGN-60" (HEAT), "PGN-6CH" (drill), "KGN" (HE), "DGN" (smoke), or "CGN" (illumination). It does not resemble any previously identified Hungarian

Continued on page 69



# BULLDOG BAL AND HIS

## Skill and Daring Save



On G-day, 24 February 1991, as the ground war was launched against Iraqi troops entrenched in Kuwait, Operational Detachment Alpha 525, a U.S. Army Special Forces A-Team, was 150 miles deep inside Iraq — and up to its ass in alligators.

The eight-man team, commanded by Chief Warrant Officer 2 Richard F. Balwanz, 39, from Stewartsville, Ohio, was collecting real-time intelligence on enemy troop movements down Highway 8 towards Kuwait, where Coalition troops were slicing through Iraqi positions like a hot K-Bar knife through butter.

**E**arly in January, “Bulldog” Balwanz’s A-Team had been stationed at Saudi Arabia’s King Fahad International Airport when given the special recon mission.

Like other Special Forces (SF) teams that would be inserted deep in enemy territory on the eve of the ground war, Balwanz and his men had to haul “hide kits” into Iraq on their backs.

The kits consisted of a camouflaged canvas tarp, to be stretched over an umbrella-like structure of pre-cut, thin-wall conduit, all of which covered a 9-by-9-by-5-foot hole the Green Berets were to dig in the ground. A foot or so of sand would be piled onto the tarp, and some vegetation added for concealment.

The first practice holes Balwanz’s A-Team dug in the Saudi desert were flops. “We’d put the [earthen] top on ’em, and they’d fall in,” Balwanz recalled.

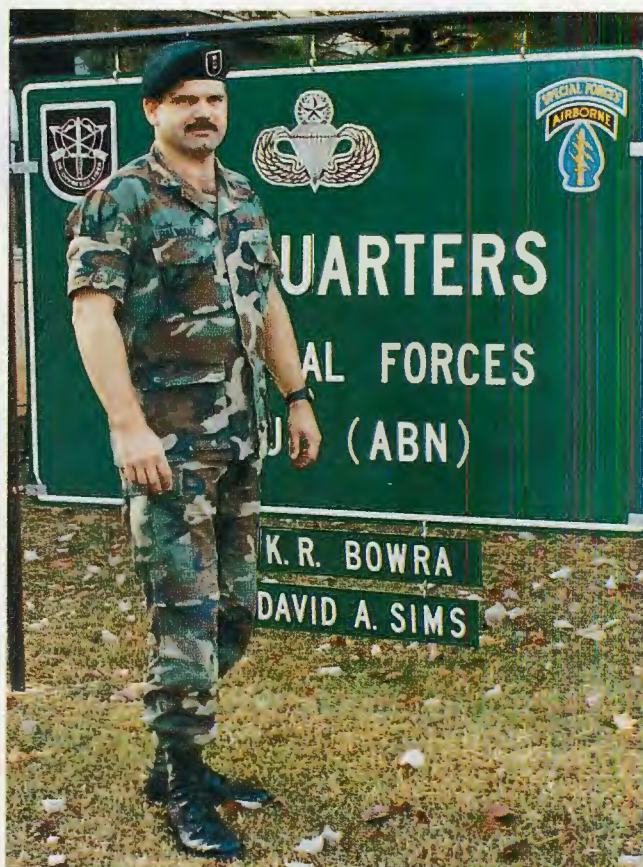
The day Coalition aircraft opened phase one of the Persian Gulf conflict, Balwanz and his men were in hide-sites in the Saudi desert, hiding from other GIs who searched for them.

Two days later, Operational Detachment Alpha 525 (ODA-525) moved north from King Fahad airport to King Khalid Military City (KKMC), the staging base for the 5th Special Forces Group.

### Go For It

Balwanz thought his team would be moving into Iraq soon, but some last-minute diplomatic moves in Geneva between U.S. Secretary of State James Baker and Iraq’s Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz, along with some eleventh-hour negotiating from the Soviets, had delayed orders to execute.

Emotions ran from rock bottom to sky high in the A-Team. “We’re not warmongers,” Balwanz said, “but we’re trained to do a job, and we were ready to go.”



CWO 2 Richard F. Balwanz, back home at 5th Special Forces Group (Abn), Fort Campbell, Kentucky. Photo: Dale B. Cooper

The mission finally came down on 23 February. Balwanz noted, “we had to be on the ground inside Iraq by 10 o’clock that night in order to be able to move to a predetermined spot intelligence had chosen and dig our hide-site before daylight.”

The team was split into four-man cells; each cell would have to stay in their separate hole four days. To be on the safe side, Balwanz built a “fudge factor” of two additional days’ water and rations into the mission.

Instead of standard-issue BDUs or “chocolate chip” desert fatigues, each man in ODA-525 wore green camouflage fatigues to blend in with vegetation in the Euphrates Valley, their destination. Team members also wore black stocking caps to keep their body heat from escaping when desert temperatures dropped at night. Staff Sergeant James “Ice Man” Weatherford, the communications sergeant, and Sergeant 1st Class Robbie “Blade” Gardner, the intelligence sergeant, preferred to wear army green “do rags” on their heads.

The Green Berets were also issued Saudi desert boots, so they wouldn’t leave familiar footprints like the U.S.-made jungle boot.



# WANZ EIGHT-MAN ARMY

## Trapped Recon Team in Iraq

by Dale B. Cooper



Balwanz's A-Team, minutes before leaving for recon mission 150 miles inside Iraq. Left to right, they are (kneeling): SSgt. James "Ice Man" Weatherford (commo), Sgt. 1st Class Robert "Buzz Saw" Degroff (weapons). Standing: SSgt. Terry "Dirty" Harris (demo), Sgt. 1st Class Daniel "Bones" Kostrzebski (medic), Sgt. 1st Class Robbie "Blade" Gardner (intel), CWO 2 Richard "Bulldog" Balwanz (commander), Sgt. 1st Class Charlie "Chuck of the Desert" Hopkins (team sergeant) and Sgt. 1st Class James "Jimbo" Hovermale (weapons).  
Photo: courtesy Richard Balwanz

Some team members found that the Saudi boots hurt their feet, so they taped cardboard onto the soles of their jungle boots and wore those.

### SFs, The Ultimate Grunts

On their backs, the Green Berets each carried more than 150 pounds of equipment: extra ammo, five gallons of water, rations, redundant radios (FMs, UHFs and a SATCOM radio with folding antenna dish), plus the hide-kits that comprised tubing, tarps and paint to touch up the tarps once they were installed over the 5-foot-deep holes.

In addition to four M16A2s, the A-Team was armed with two M203s (a 40mm grenade launcher mounted beneath an M16A2), and two Heckler & Koch suppressed MP5SD submachine guns. Balwanz and his team sergeant, Sgt. 1st Class Charlie "Chuck of the Desert" Hopkins carried the MP5SDs. Each of the eight team members also carried a 9mm Beretta pistol.

ODA-525 launched from KKMCC at 0630 hours, aboard two MH-60 Blackhawks of the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment (Airborne) from Fort Campbell, Kentucky. They flew to Rahfa airfield, a small fixed-wing staging base on the Saudi-

Kuwaiti border, where the Blackhawks were refueled for a four-hour, round-trip flight into Indian country.

"The air crew had determined that by the time they took us in, dropped us off, and returned to Rahfa, they would only have 10 minutes worth of fuel left," Balwanz said.

If the A-Team encountered any Iraqi resistance on the ground and needed to be extracted, it had less than five minutes to recall the Blackhawks — "something we had to live with," Balwanz shrugged.

The mission called for Balwanz and his team to be dropped off near the Iraqi village of Suwayqiyh-Ghazi along the Shatt al Garghriff, a tributary of the Euphrates River. Like two smaller three-man SF teams from the 5th Group that were inserted about 50 miles away, Balwanz was to monitor traffic moving along Highway 8, leading from Baghdad to Nasiriyah.

### Eyes And Ears For An Army

The commander of XVIII Airborne Corps wanted to get a "heads up" on any enemy troop movements sent to counter his flanking movement with the 101st Airborne Division (Assault), 82nd Airborne Division, 24th Infantry Division, and 3rd Armored



Cavalry Regiment which were to race across a 250-mile stretch of desert to the Euphrates from the west (see map).

"He wanted to know what the enemy was doing in that area. He wanted to know what kind of equipment was coming down that highway, or leaving," Balwanz recalled.

Thus when the ground war kicked off, the commander would know whether any Iraqi mechanized infantry divisions were moving toward Nasiriyah or hauling ass back to Baghdad. The commander had his AWACS overhead, but he didn't have any real-time intel in that area except SF teams. These were his eyes and ears on the ground.

Balwanz used his SATCOM radio to communicate directly with an SF liaison officer at XVIII Airborne Corps headquarters, who in turn relayed vital troop movement information to the corps commander.

ODA-525 departed Rahfa at 2000 hours on 23 February for a two-hour flight to a landing zone deep inside Iraqi territory. The two modified Blackhawks flew the team in.

### Insertus Interruptus

En route to Iraq, Balwanz's team was recalled. "Abort the mission — return to Rahfa," was the word. But once the team turned back to its staging area on the Saudi-Kuwaiti border, it received word to again execute its mission. To this day, Balwanz does not know what caused the mix-up, but the command decision created a few problems for ODA-525.

"Refueling at Rahfa put us further behind our time frames," Balwanz noted. Arriving on the ground in Iraq 45 minutes late wasn't that big a deal, but the team had to sync its infiltration with the satellite it used to position itself on the ground. The Global Positioning System (GPS) satellite enables military units on the ground and in the air to pinpoint their locations anywhere in the world.

About 10 minutes out from the LZ, satellite coverage was lost because of the snafu at XVIII Corps.

"The aircraft commander turned around and told me he wasn't going to be able to put me exactly where I wanted to be, because he had just lost satellite coverage," Balwanz recalled.

### Ground Effect?

Flying about 10 feet off the deck at 140 knots, the helicopter carrying Balwanz and three of his men hit a sand dune. The pilot had time to pull power, lift the nose and avoid plowing into it head-on, but this tore the rear landing-gear assembly off the aircraft.

With true Night Stalker savoir faire, pilot Chief Warrant Officer 3 Kenny Collier didn't even bat an eye. When Balwanz asked what had happened, Collier replied, "I just tore a wheel off

on a sand dune, but don't worry about it."

"If he wasn't worried about it," Balwanz reasoned later, "why should I get excited?"

Prior to the actual infiltration, plans called for a false insertion to throw the enemy off balance. It worked. On that insertion, Iraqi anti-aircraft radar "painted" both Blackhawks.

Later, after the SF team was inserted, the Blackhawks did two more false insertions to further confuse the Iraqis.

ODA-525 jumped off the Blackhawks into a clear night, then cleared the LZ. "You could see almost forever," Balwanz said. He counted heads and called a security halt to make sure no one had observed the infiltration.

By the time the team pulled out its GPS, satellite coverage had returned and Balwanz knew exactly where he was — about 1,500 meters north of where he wanted to be. "We had done our homework, so we knew there were canal systems in the area, and



that's what we wanted to get into."

While six members of the team cached an emergency radio along their E&E (Escape and Evasion) corridor, Balwanz and his point man, Sgt. 1st Class James "Jimbo" Hovermale went forward and scouted out the area that they wanted to be in.

### Gopher It!

Plans called for two hide-holes to be dug, about 150 meters apart on both sides of a canal overlooking Highway 8, some 300 meters distant.

"That's close," said Balwanz, "but we had to be able to identify signature items of equipment. For example, a Scud launcher or Scud missile, or a T-72 tank as compared to a T-54 tank. At nighttime especially, we had to be that close to the highway to identify that type of equipment with our night-vision goggles," (NVG/PVS-7s, the same optics their helicopter pilots used to fly them into Iraq).

"It's a good piece of equipment, but you just don't get the

Deployed along Highway 8 near Suwayqiyh-Ghazi, Iraq, Balwanz's recon team was to monitor Iraqi troop movements between Baghdad and Nasiriyah, along which Saddam might send troops in response to end-run sweeps from attacking XVIII and VII Corps units.





distance you need," Balwanz added. "And that's why we had to get so close to the highway. It was a lesson learned, and that's why we need better optics so we can stand-off next time."

Although the team had rehearsed digging hide-sites in Saudi Arabia where it was sandy, the soil in Iraq was loamy like back home in the Midwest, so it was a lot harder digging.

For that reason, Balwanz decided to dig holes in the soft dirt of berms on both sides of the canal, because he didn't want to be digging by daylight when Iraqi civilians headed for the fields to tend their crops.

It was already getting daylight by the time team members completed their hide-sites and crawled into them.

"We knew where the enemy was, his strength and what his reaction time was, but one thing we didn't know was about civilians in the area," Balwanz noted. "Intel told us the civilians might be hostile to us or turn a deaf ear, but that runs the whole

Robert "Buzz Saw" Degroff jumped up and grabbed Balwanz' suppressed 9mm H&K SMG, ducking out the exit door into the canal, looking for guidance from their leader. "Sir, what are we going to do?" one whispered.

"Look, we're not going to shoot any unarmed civilians, especially children. That's not going to happen, fellas," Balwanz replied. He contacted the other half of his team down the irrigation ditch, informing them his position had been compromised, and it was time to leave.

As both teams were moving into the canal, Balwanz got on the SATCOM radio, contacted corps and requested an emergency exfiltration.

The A-Team moved up the canal to the east, 200 to 300 meters away from the road, where it set up defensive positions.

Balwanz was trying to determine the extent of the compromise. Were the Iraqis going to come after him, or leave his team alone?



gamut so that really didn't tell us a whole lot about them."

### Good Morning, Iraq

When the sun came up at about 0630 hours, the fields on either side of the canal came alive with people. At home, farmers don't go walking through their fields once they're planted, but the Iraqis do.

"The women were gathering up wood, the children were playing and the men were herding cattle, sheep and goats," said Balwanz, who recalled some 30 people moving around in all directions. "And then we heard some voices." Kids were playing in front of his hide position — a little boy and a girl. "You could tell by what they were saying to each other in Arabic that they were getting curious."

After peering through the observation slit in Balwanz's hide, Weatherford shook the team leader and said, "there's people out here looking ... we might have some problems."

### Hello, I'm Johnny Cache

"Sure enough, they [the kids] walked up, looked directly into that portal right in at us, and then screamed as they jumped back and took off," Balwanz said.

Immediately, two other guys in the hole, Sgt. 1st Class Daniel "Bones" Kostrzebski, the medical sergeant, and Sgt. 1st Class

Blackhawk helicopter over Saudi Arabia, as flown by 160th Special Operations Air Regiment to insert, and rescue, Balwanz's eight-man special recon team inside Iraq. Photo: Dale B. Cooper

Those were the unanswered questions. But the civilians in the field gave the Green Berets no indication they knew they were there.

"I can only guess that nobody believed the little kids when they told their parents about seeing soldiers in the ground," Balwanz said.

### Waiting It Out

Balwanz ordered Weatherford to cancel the exfil bird and inform XVIII Airborne Corps his team was going to hunker down in the canal and continue observing Highway 8.

Although only one of the holes had been compromised, Balwanz couldn't risk his team by returning to its holes and being caught like rats. By moving his entire team back up the canal, he could survey the entire area and continue his mission, and if need be move his men to meet any threat. "The mission always comes first in Special Forces," he noted.

For the next four hours, everything went smoothly. The team observed several enemy vehicles, trucks and tanks being towed up and down the highway, but no significant movement south toward



the important crossroads at Nasiriyah.

Although the fields were crawling with civilians, Balwanz felt confident he could continue the mission. But at about 1230 hours, the team was spotted again.

### What Is This? Sesame Street?

"Some children were playing to the northeast of us and came down along the canal," recalled Balwanz, who felt maybe they had seen him scoping the road. He couldn't be sure until he saw them coming down the ditch line with an adult.

"Here was this guy dressed in the traditional garb, a robe and a Palestinian-type headdress, who walks right up and looks down at us in the ditch," said Balwanz, who took note that the man wasn't armed. Shooting the shepherd was out of the question. "As soon as we had shot him, or dragged him into the ditch, it wouldn't have been long before someone missed this man."

Balwanz greeted the man in his native tongue — "*Salam a lekum*," (Peace be with you), a standard greeting throughout the Middle East.

The man mumbled something. Neither Balwanz, who understands Arabic but doesn't speak it fluently, nor his team caught what the man said before he ran away. Any hope that the man might ignore the Americans like the two kids did a few hours earlier were shattered when the shepherd dropped his children off with some friends tending a flock of sheep some 500 meters away, then headed into town.

As the A-Team snaked its way up the ditch further from the highway, unarmed teenagers wearing military-type uniforms began coming closer, along with some civilians.

### [Almost] Everybody Loves A Parade

"*Kaf!*" — ("Halt!" in Arabic) yelled Balwanz, as he stood up in the ditch with his MP5SD.

At about that time, there came 30 Bedouins with their antique rifles, along with four or five deuce-and-a-half trucks, a Toyota Land Cruiser (command-type vehicle) and a bus, all stopping along the highway. An estimated 150 Iraqi soldiers armed with Kalashnikov rifles spewed out of the bus.

Another satellite call went to XVIII Airborne Corps for an emergency exfiltration and CAS (Close Air Support).

Balwanz told the SF liaison at corps headquarters that his team was about to be locked in heavy combat with a company-sized enemy force.

All of the team's classified radio gear, crypto and burst devices were stuffed into a rucksack rigged with a pre-armed C4 explosive charge that had a one-minute timed fuse. They rigged everything except one radio, an LST-5 multi-purpose radio to be used with SATCOM, or for talking with CAS.

"It's showtime, guys!" Balwanz cried as they threw their rucksacks on the explosive charge and began to move further up the ditch.

As Balwanz glanced back over his shoulder, two platoons of Iraqi infantry were trying to outflank him. No shots had been fired, but it was obvious the enemy sought to encircle the A-Team.

"They may have thought we were a downed air crew, 'cause they couldn't see the whole team," recalled Balwanz, who hadn't known then that the ground war was underway.

Just before the charge went off in the ditch, Balwanz and his men

came under a heavy volume of fire. The Iraqis were only a minute behind them.

The Bedouins also opened fire, but the battle was reminiscent of the First Battle of Manassas (Bull Run) during the U.S. Civil War.

"Here's people coming out of town to watch their boys kill or capture these Americans," Balwanz said. "Even the kids were running along, trying to get in close and point out where we're at."

### Closing In

It's a miracle none of Balwanz's men were hit. "Rounds were flying all around as we hauled ass up the ditch."

Balwanz didn't want to fight, especially against 150 Iraqi soldiers and 30 Bedouins, but they gave him no choice. ODA-525 was in danger of being overrun. Balwanz ordered Degroff and Hovermale, his weapons specialists, to lay down a barrage of 40mm HE rounds and break up the flanking movements.

"When they started laying the rounds down, Iraqis started disappearing," Balwanz said. He was not impressed by the enemy. "They made easy targets as they walked upright toward the trench, firing their weapons."

### Poor Man's Artillery

**WHUMP, WHUMP, WHUMP!** Degroff and Hovermale cut down the left and right flanks, then dropped some rounds into the ditch, stopping the enemy advance dead in its tracks.

By now, ODA-525 was locked in a full-fledged firefight with more than a company of Iraqi soldiers. The tendency in such a situation is to "rock 'n' roll" — to put down as many rounds as you can — but the team members were only carrying a double basic load of 5.56mm ammo (420 rounds), so, no "r 'n' r"; just single shots and every round counts.

Balwanz set up his defenses in an elbow in the canal — a position enabling him to control the tempo of the battle.

Unlike the A-Team, which was hunkering down behind berms of dirt along the canal, the Iraqis had no cover. When they got up, they went down, just like pop-up targets on a rifle range.

### One Round, One 'Raqi

Five of the A-Team members were Class-A snipers. They didn't have sniper weapons, but they did have the training, and this made the

difference at 500 meters. Any Iraqi who stood up got his ticket punched to paradise.

"We must have killed 40 of them in the first 10 minutes," said Balwanz, remembering the Iraqis screaming at the top of their lungs in an Arabic war cry while charging his position. They were cut down by well-directed M16 and M203 fire.

Even though more than half of his men had been to the best sniper schools the U.S. military could offer, they were vastly outnumbered and the Iraqis were inching closer, some crawling into the ditch.

The gravity of the situation was underscored when best friends Degroff and Kostrzebski waved good-bye to each other from across the ditch.

"We were fighting back," said Balwanz, "but it didn't look too good. The last thing we heard on SATCOM was that air support was 20 minutes out, and the Iraqis were just a minute behind us." This bad news torpedoed the team's morale.

Instead of 20 minutes, it took about 45 minutes for the first sortie to arrive over the battlefield — a flight of four F-16 Fighting



Silver Star, second highest U.S. award for gallantry in action, awarded to Richard "Bulldog" Balwanz. Photo: DoD

Falcons of the 17th Tactical Fighter Squadron based at Shaw Air Force Base, South Carolina.

When scurrying up the ditch under fire, the team lost a piece of critical equipment — the whip antenna for the LST-5. The only other thing the team had was the SATCOM radio that works line-of-sight. Weatherford hauled the heavy SATCOM into position so that Gardner could aim its 20-inch dish at the F-16s.

### Saved By Their PRCs

“We could hear them [the pilots] real good,” said Balwanz, but the team’s call sign was broken. “We could hear one of them say, ‘Guard’s down there ... I can hear him but it’s all garbled. I don’t know where he’s at.’”

Degroff saved the day when he pulled out a PRC-90 survival radio that aircrews carry. In addition to a beacon mode, the small hand-held radio also has a voice mode.

Another member of the team also carried a PRC-90, but with bullets zinging over their heads, no one thought to use the survival radios to communicate with the F-16s.

“This is Guard, anybody on this net, this is Guard!” yelled Degroff. The Air Force pilots overhead couldn’t hear him, but an AWACS did, and the flying command post contacted the F-16s and gave the pilots the UHF frequency for Guard.

Although they now had voice contact with the SF team on the ground, the F-16 pilots were afraid to come down low and lay down some ordnance for fear of ADA (Air Defense Artillery), but Balwanz assured the pilots the only ADA he was aware of was far to the south around Nasiriyah.

There was some sporadic 37mm fire coming from the nearby town, but it was nothing to worry about as long as the F-16s stayed above it while flying over the town and rolling in on the target.

### Street Sweepers

As the first pair of Falcons swooped down on the highway, about a dozen military vehicles were being flagged down by some 50 Iraqi soldiers, who were getting on line and preparing to attack.

“The first aircraft dropped a couple of CBUs [cluster bombs] on their heads, just destroying that column of vehicles and those people,” Balwanz noted.

When the F-16s pulled out of their dives and jinked back upstairs, they left behind a burning mass of twisted metal.

Degroff wanted to give the pilot a bomb damage assessment, but the flight leader politely declined the offer — he didn’t need to be told he had just wasted a lot of Iraqis.

The next bunch of vehicles coming down the road didn’t stop when Iraqi soldiers tried to flag them down. Nothing doing! They boogied on south.

As they saw this happen, the SF team’s spirit soared like an eagle. “It’s like being in a street fight, and your big brother shows up,” Balwanz said.

Although the odds had been cut down dramatically, a platoon of about 50 or 60 Iraqis had maneuvered around behind a small mound, where Balwanz couldn’t reach out and touch them. However, the next air strike delivered some CBUs on the Iraqi position and eliminated that threat.

### Body Count<sup>2</sup>

Some Iraqis who were “danger close,” about 200 meters away, were the next to die. Balwanz and his men lay down in the ditch and watched as the detritus of Iraqi soldiers sailed over them.

Laying down cluster bombs within 200 meters is risky business, but worth the risk when you’re about to be overrun.

“We could lay in the ditch and watch the bombs coming in,” said Balwanz, who recalled whispering a little prayer that they wouldn’t fall on their heads. “A lot of times, they looked like they were coming right at us.”

Laying in the ditch with CBUs exploding that close was like laying in a bowl of Jell-O, because the ground beneath you shakes with every explosion. After each of the sorties, the Iraqis regrouped and attacked again. “They were real game,” Balwanz noted. “Not very bright, but real game.”

“There was nobody here giving up. We were in their backyard and they were pissed, plus we’ve done killed a bunch of them,” Balwanz added. He continually adjusted his team’s firepower to deal with Iraqis that tried to gain access to the ditch or outflank the team.

The possibility of Iraqis coming up the canal in force and overrunning his small band was Balwanz’s biggest fear. “They could be on top of us, and we would not be able to stop them.”

### Shoot-Out At The OK Canal

That’s why Balwanz called a CBU strike on the ditch. As soon as the air strike lifted, he and Gardner went shoulder to shoulder down the canal. Balwanz hoped to catch the enemy’s point element coming up that canal and put some fire on them: “Let ‘em know we know they’re there.”

One hundred meters down the ditch, Balwanz and Gardner rounded a bend and stared face to face at three Iraqi soldiers who had survived the bombing by hunkering down.

The Iraqis couldn’t raise their AKs fast enough. The H&K MP5SD Balwanz carried, along with Gardner’s M16A2, riddled the Iraqis before the enemy soldiers could blink their eyes.

“It was just like a Western shootout,” said Balwanz, “BURRRRRRRP!” When another group of Iraqis down the ditch heard the gunfire, they took off.

Balwanz and Gardner traveled all the way down the ditch to the spot where they had earlier destroyed their radios and sensitive material.

The ditch looked like a butcher shop. Mutilated bodies were scattered everywhere. The sides of the ditch were bloodstained where the wounded had been dragged to safety.

### OK If We Borrow These?

Gathering up four rucksacks full of personal gear and picking up some captured AKs to augment their firepower, Balwanz and Gardner ran back up the ditch toward their comrades, coming under sporadic fire from the flanks.

Balwanz got on the other PRC-90 and called for his demolitions experts, SSgt. Terry “Dirty” Harris and weapons sergeant Hovermale to help haul the loot back to their perimeter.

While watching the deep battlefield for Balwanz with a pair of binoculars, Hopkins spotted a squad of 15 Iraqi soldiers getting out of a truck on the road and heading for the canal.

At that moment, another F-16 came on station, and Balwanz radioed the pilot to “take out the truck and strafe the lower end of the canal.” Apparently there were no survivors; Balwanz never saw anyone come up the canal, or leave it.

While SF often say “we own the night,” darkness sent a shudder down Balwanz’ spine, because it’s hard to call in CAS in the dark.

The A-Team had strobe lights to mark its location, but flashing a light in a situation like this is suicide, so the team chose to rely on NVGs (night-vision goggles) and shoot it out with the Iraqis if it had to. Good choice, because after darkness fell, ODA-525 took no more hostile fire.

### Moonlight Boogie

With no more fire coming his way, Balwanz decided to leave the ditch where he’d been pinned down all afternoon, and retreat in small groups about 300 meters across open desert and berms bordering another canal. “I wanted to place some cover between the enemy and the place where the exfiltration teams would land,” he later said.

As soon as the A-Team crossed the canal, an F-16 flying cover overhead came on the Guard frequency and reported, “your birds (two MH-60 Blackhawks) are 12 minutes out.” What a morale booster!

Ironically, Collier and Fraybolt, the Night Stalker pilots from Task Force 160 who took Balwanz’s team into Iraq, were coming back to get them because they were familiar with the area where they had dropped off the team.

However, the team’s GPS “got busted” in the firefight and

*Continued on page 73*



# GOING TO WAR WITH A CAMERA

## At The Front With Croatia's Internationals

Text & Photos by Tony Rogers

**E**ver since my first trip to Yugoslavia last July, I had the feeling I would return. Five months later, I was in a bar in London's King's Road, discussing the possibility with former Royal Marines Ronnie and Jim, who were keen to video the war. Another fellow, Alan, who claimed to be ex-Australian Special Air Service (SAS), decided to come along "for the experience."

Things moved rapidly after that. A few days later, we loaded equipment and supplies into a rented transit van, and at 0130 on a cold winter morning, boarded the Dover-Calais cross-channel ferry. We reached the Croatian capital of Zagreb about 40 hours later.

We were there primarily to cover the "Internationals" — foreign volunteers fighting for Croatian independence. Our experience acquiring that material is a story in itself.

### Locating The Locals

The first place we visited in Zagreb was the headquarters of HOS, the military wing of *Hrvatska Stranka Prava* — the Croatian Party of Rights — where Reg, a former British soldier, soon brought us up to date on local events. He was also invaluable in advising us on which areas to visit.

Upon checking into a hotel a half-hour later, we were approached by another Englishman. Karl was an altogether different character. After experiencing the ferocity of the Yugoslavian federal army's firepower, he had become a very disillusioned chap and was now AWOL. It came as a surprise therefore when Karl agreed to show us the way to the front at Karlovac, southwest of the city, where his former unit was based. He even offered to introduce us to the Internationals there.

At last, we reached the outskirts of Karlovac, where we were required to pull over at a police roadblock. We were still without local press accreditation, but this didn't seem to concern the police, who satisfied themselves with a cursory inspection of our vehicle before waving us on. A few minutes later, we arrived at a second roadblock on the other side of town.

We clearly presented an amusing spectacle for the soldiers there. I suppose we were a suspicious looking "TV crew." Most of us were wearing combat boots and Gulf War flak vests, and a glance in the rear of our vehicle revealed military packs and cartons of military rations. Yet, in spite of what they might have thought — or, maybe, because of it — the soldiers allowed us to proceed. We soon arrived at a farmhouse being used as a billet by six of Karl's former mates. There were four Brits, a Frenchman and a local signaller. Only one man declined to be interviewed.





HOS soldier  
and a furry  
recruit.

Croatian army T-55 near front line in  
east Croatia.



So it was that I found myself photographing Karl and his fellow Brit, Andrew, in fire positions behind a burned-out T-34 (yes — a T-34). Ineffective small arms fire added some excitement to the moment.

We then moved across to a cemetery, where shell craters and shattered headstones provided grim testimony to Serbian marksmanship. Not the ideal place to be caught during a Serbian artillery strike. Or, perhaps it was — depending on how you looked at it.

The following day, we visited the press office at the fashionable Hotel Inter-Continental and were issued local press passes. Then, following Reg's advice, we headed for eastern Croatia. Karl agreed to be our guide, while his girlfriend, Diana, was persuaded to come as an interpreter.

At Durdevac, 110km east of the capital,

certainly would not have gotten this far. Wishing them luck, we joined the Zengee convoy and headed southeast, along the Hungarian border, reaching Privlaka late that night.

Again, we were made to feel at home. A cute female soldier, who everyone called "Baby," served us soup, bread and cheese — and a glass each of the local plum brandy. The stuff was deadly. Yet, everybody drank it — often — which might help to explain the prevailing situation in Yugoslavia.

In the morning, our hosts took us to the River Bosut, beyond which lay Serbian lines. Jim and I were invited to move forward into some trenches. A big fellow then signalled for us to wait and watch, whereupon he took up a fire position and blasted away at the enemy with his AK.



Members of Croatian "Zebras" special forces unit sweep for snipers in Petrinija, some 30 miles south of Zagreb. Lead trooper carries suppressed Yugoslavian M72. Photo: AP/Wide World

Diana suggested we stop to visit a friend whose husband, a Croatian army officer, she could ask about the safest route beyond the town. As luck would have it, Diana's friends were able to put us in touch with the local National Guard (ZNG, or *Zengee*), some of whom were about to depart for Privlaka, a short distance from our ultimate destination. Nobody objected to our tagging along. On the contrary, we were made to feel most welcome. Prior to setting off, the *Zengee* treated us to a hefty lunch, and even supplied us with fresh rations.

#### Good-Byes To Our Guides

As we prepared to leave, Karl and Diana asked if they could discontinue the journey now that we had tied in with the army. Understandably, Diana was not keen for her man to return to the front, and who could blame her? The couple had been a tremendous help, and without them we

For good measure, the Croatian also fired a couple of *trombones* — M60 rifle grenades — while another guy loosed a few more rounds. This all tended to upset the Serbs who, not surprisingly, proceeded to shoot back. Jim had his first taste of action as we withdrew under fire to where the others were waiting.

#### Stirring The Pot

Jim and Alan then amused themselves with a borrowed AK — much to the Croatians' delight. Although they only fired into some destroyed vehicles across the river (*that's the story we agreed on ... right, lads?*), the noise alone was sure to provoke the Serbs. Jim and Alan let loose on full auto and Ronnie would have, too, if he hadn't been prevented from doing so by a Croat who suddenly realized the repercussions of antagonizing the enemy further.

During this madness, I was taken to an outpost from where I observed five Serbian tanks. Tanks! I couldn't believe it. *The Croatians were using AKs against bloody tanks.*

"Tony, let's go! We're going," Alan suddenly called.

Great, I thought. First, we stir up a hornet's nest for these poor buggers, then run away and leave them to face the consequences. Sure enough, we were sent scurrying for cover when the tanks retaliated a while later. The shells were close — but not so close as to cause us any damage. My colleagues considered the episode as great fun. Within a couple of days, their attitude would change.

After Privlaka, the *Zengee* provided an escort as far as Vinkovci, where we were introduced to the local police chief. Our escort translated while we gave our reasons for being there (To cover the war — Honest).

#### Papers, Please ...

Unimpressed, the police chief demanded to see our papers.

"What papers?" I asked.

"Your papers from Zagreb."

I explained that all we had were our press passes. Nobody had mentioned a requirement for any other documentation. I tried another approach.

"We wish to visit \_\_\_\_\_," I said, mentioning a village defended by HOS. It was a mistake. There was considerable animosity between Mr. Dobroslav Paraga's extreme right-wing HOS organization and the army and police — who were controlled by Croatian President Franjo Tudjman's party.

"No papers — good-bye," said the chief — this time in perfect English.

"Just a minute ...," I began.

"Good-bye," the chief repeated, louder this time, while placing a hand on his holster.

Alan was horrified. "The man said good-bye," he said. "That means good-bye. Let's go."

We had come too far to give up so easily. As the policeman strode back to his office, I persuaded our ZNG man to intervene on our behalf. A minute later, he reappeared.

"Let's go," he told us. Once glance at his worried expression convinced me that I had pushed things far enough.

#### First Things Last

The ZNG man then decided to take us to the town's press office, leading me to wonder why we hadn't gone there in the first place. He explained our problem to the press officer, and left us. Somebody made a telephone call, and suddenly we were allowed to remain in Vinkovci. The local press representative even offered to accompany us on a tour of the area. Consequently, we found ourselves in a village which, the press man cheerfully informed us, had so far that day been hit by 113 shells (*Oh, really ... ?*).

We were shown a typical village, the streets bordered on both sides by small trees and simple, tile-roofed houses. Many buildings were scarred from the shelling.





Croatian BOV-3 SPAAG at front line near Karlovac shows "custom" paint job, colors of Croatian army. Mounting three 20mm guns, BOV-3 can engage aerial targets up to 1,500 meters.

We had just gotten out of our van when without warning a terrific bang signalled the arrival of shell No. 114. Instinctively, I leapt into a drainage ditch. The next round landed close by, quickly followed by another. In all, there were half-a-dozen detonations.

According to the press rep, we had been shot at by tanks. When the press rep suggested we return to Vinkovci, none of us argued. We had been through enough for one day.

#### A "Safe" Hotel

That evening, we stayed at the Hotel Slavonija. We had to — it was the only one in town. Because of its relatively intact condition, I foolishly assumed that it was not being targeted by the Serbs. My equally foolish colleagues believed me. Throughout that night, the Serbs, who must have been excellent shots, managed to place their rounds extremely close to the hotel. Once, I awoke to the sound of bullets zipping past our window. Somehow, Alan slept through it all.

Outside our hotel the next morning, I spotted a car with the magic letters HOS painted all over it. I approached its driver, who agreed to take us to the local headquarters. There, we met a female soldier who spoke excellent English and kindly offered to help our efforts to find a story.

The first place we visited was the "Crisis Center," where an European Community (EC) delegation was holding a meeting with area military chiefs. Subsequently, we joined the entourage of pressmen who had descended on Vinkovci and followed them to the devastated town of Nustar. Ruins, shrouded in a heavy mist, presented a dismal and depressing scene. We did not stay long. The EC delegates paused only to chat briefly with some soldiers, and then we had to leave. The next stop was at Vinkovci hospital, where we detached ourselves from the main press

party. A Frenchman and two Poles, all freelance photographers, opted to join us.

The Frenchman, Xavier, was quickly renamed "Frenchy" — what else? He had just spent 10 days living with HOS. Previously, he had covered the war in Burma. A certifiable head-case, he fitted perfectly into our little group.

Frenchy, Jim, Ronnie and Alan now decided to film inside the hospital. Along with the Polish photographers, I chose to return to Nustar. All of us agreed to rendezvous at the hotel later that day.

#### Batman

Back at Nustar, we met "Batman," a cheerful fellow who wore a psychedelic-painted helmet adorned with a peace symbol on one side and "Born to Kill" on the other.

"My town," Batman announced, as he gestured at our desolate surroundings.

"Beautiful place," commented one of the Poles.

Through Batman, we met "Mr. X," a young British soldier AWOL from the Irish Hussars. Initially reluctant to have his picture taken, Mr. X eventually relented.

"For my adjutant," he told me, as I photographed him atop his T-55 tank.

We returned to the hospital late that afternoon. An hour or two later, Jim phoned me from the desk. I was relieved to hear that everyone was all right, but when I joined them in the hotel bar I immediately sensed the tension. Nerves were frayed, and no wonder. After leaving the hospital, my friends had parted company with Frenchy. That night, another HOS soldier had escorted them to a forward location. As a precaution, their van's lights were disconnected — a pointless exercise, as nobody bothered doing the same in the HOS car leading the way. Inevitably, the two vehicles came under fire. Abandoning theirs, Jim, Ronnie and Alan had to lie in the open as shells landed all around. They were so close that their van was splattered with dirt flung up by explosions.

Amazingly, everyone survived the attack. However, the incident finally made my friends realize just how vulnerable they were — as did the sight of two dead soldiers. One had apparently fallen victim to some earlier shelling. The other had been badly burned by the backblast from a rocket launcher. For Ronnie, the episode clearly evoked some painful memories from the Falklands War, where he fought nine years previously. Now, Jim and Alan also knew what war was all about. When the big Aussie saw the bodies, he promptly threw up. All agreed that it had been a particularly harrowing experience.

As we talked, there was a loud bang

from outside. Here we go, I thought, as a second explosion shook the building.

"The next will be very, very close," someone calmly said. He was right. It hit the hotel. So much for my theory about the place being safe from artillery. As I came out from under the table, our escort shook his head. Along with everybody else, he hadn't budged. "And I thought you English were cool," he muttered.

#### No Sleep At Hotel Shrapnel

He then asked if I preferred to spend the night at the hotel or in a HOS bunker. Was he kidding?

"I'll get my kit," I replied, and rushed upstairs where I found the Polish photographers dressed in their underwear, standing outside their room. Both men were quite pale and totally incomprehensible.

"Are you alright?" I asked, and then saw the state of their room. Shell fragments had punched holes through their door. The window was blown in, and glass and debris covered the floor and beds. Yet



Ronnie, former Royal Marine (in cap) assists care of elderly woman injured in car accident, apparently caused when driver panicked during artillery attack. As author took photo, shells were falling in same block.

neither man was hurt.

"Grab your things, get dressed and come down to the bar," I told them before hurrying to my own room, where I snatched up my belongings and raced back downstairs. When I told the others what had happened, they burst out laughing. The Poles joined us a few minutes later, whereupon everyone fell about all over again. Both men took it in good humor.

"When I pay for a hotel room," one of them said, deadpan, "I expect to be allowed to sleep in comfort."

Unfortunately, our HOS escort was able to provide shelter for only four of us, so we were obliged to say goodbye to the good-natured Poles. We had no choice — unless we wanted to remain at the hotel. Even so, I felt terribly guilty about leaving them.

Later that night, we arrived at the

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# DRAGOON SCOU

## Elite Cavalry Unit Leads French Army into 21st Century

by Eric Micheletti with Colonel Alex M. S. McColl

**P**art of the cavalry mystique is the conviction that a cavalryman can do any military job better than anyone else. Whether that's true or not isn't the point: If the troops *think* they can do it, they can do it. So, you give them the traditional cavalry mission of getting very far out, seeing without being seen and reporting everything the enemy is doing.

But what do you do with a 300-year-old horse cavalry regiment on a modern battlefield? In a grim and industrial modern war, the horses, sabers and dashing uniforms are, alas, long gone or at least no longer physically present. But the spirit, which is the invisible specter of this extinct breed of warrior, is very much alive and well in the French army's 13th Regiment of *Dragon Parachutistes*.

The 13th Regiment of Dragoons was initially raised in 1676 — that's 99 years before the American battles at Lexington and Concord. At that time dragoons were mounted infantry, but they rapidly evolved into medium cavalry.

For the next 260 years, the 13th was a horse-mounted regiment fighting in the great wars of Louis XIV, Frederick the Great (on the opposing side, of course) and Napoleon (at Hohenlinden, Austerlitz, Jena and Borodino). It also saw action in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71, and in World War I (notably at Ypres in 1914 and Verdun in 1916).





# TS



Bike-mounted team member and his equipment. The 3rd Squadron presently has Cagiva 200cc motorcycles, weighing 264 pounds with a range of 250km. These will be replaced by 350cc Yamahas, which are regarded as more powerful and durable — also quieter with a four-cycle engine instead of the Cagiva's two-cycle engine. The team member's equipment and supplies are attached in various pouches to the machine, including a 20-liter jerrycan that significantly increases range. Even in difficult terrain, this machine is relatively manageable.

INSET: Members of the 13th Dragoons at As Salman, Iraq, during Desert Storm.







ABOVE: The H&K MP5SD3 (left) was selected for its silent operation, but there are times when missions require greater firepower, so recon teams also carry the FA MAS infantry rifle (right).



Crest of the 13th's *brousse* (brush) unit, which is pre-positioned in central Africa for rapid deployment to former colonies and other African hot spots.

In 1936, the regiment was remounted on Somua tanks; most of these were lost in the fighting retreat to Dunkirk in June 1940. It is not commonly known, but most of the considerable number of French troops who were taken off at Dunkirk went back to France to get on with fighting the Germans, and were captured in

the ensuing debacle. This included the 13th Dragoons.

The regiment was reactivated in October 1944, with 12 Somua tanks recaptured from the Germans. It took part in the siege of the Royan pocket on France's west coast. The Somua was probably the best of the pre-1940 French tanks. After occupation duty in Germany, the regiment was deactivated in November 1945.

Later, the regiment was again reactivated as a parachute unit in 1952 at Castres: Beginning in 1953, it took part in the French-Algerian War. In 1962, the 13th returned to France and a year later was moved to its present cantonment at Dieuze in the Department of Moselle, in what used to be the province of Lorraine in northeastern France. One squadron was

An operational jumper of a recon team in the 3rd Squadron. The 13th Dragoons has three times as many qualified jumpers as any other French parachute regiment — one of every two men are qualified. In a Gore-Tex cammo uniform, with H&K MP5SD3 submachine gun attached under the arm to the parachute harness, this jumper is equipped with the team bag (French acronym SOGH) and carries the boards for making the roof to his hideout. The regiment's free-fall jumpers have a priority of employment in overseas operations. Sixteen of them have more than 100 night jumps each.





## THE EQUIPMENT OF A RECON TEAM MEMBER

**W**ithin the unit, in addition to the physical and technical training, each member of a recon team has specific equipment suited to his mission. The dragoon in a recon team has the "guerrilla" uniform jacket and trousers developed in the 1960s by and for the regiment, and more recently adopted by the 1st RPIM (1st Regiment Parachutists d'Infanterie "de la Marine").

This uniform, unique in the French army, has the advantages of large pockets and a collar protecting one's neck and back of one's head from cold. The trousers have suspenders, which reduce the risk of losing the trousers when pockets are overloaded. Finally, the team member has chasseur-type khaki gaiters, facilitating walking in wet conditions. Besides the guerrilla uniform, the team member has an exterior Gore-Tex camouflaged uniform to resist cold and rain.

In addition to the Gore-Tex uniform for protection against extreme cold, recon teams of the 13th were equipped during the '60s with a "Himalaya" uniform consisting of jacket, trousers and slippers. Very effective for the mountain environs, this was regularly used during the annual training of the squadrons at Modane in the French Alps.

That uniform is being gradually replaced with one of Thinsulate. This synthetic fiber, protected by a layer of Gore-Tex, has the same thermal qualities as goose down used in the Himalaya model, but is less bulky and permits greater freedom of movement.

Inside his rucksack, a team member carries a sleeping bag of his own choice and a Gore-Tex poncho. This is not the regulation poncho — it is entirely waterproof and provides good insulation from the ground. Very frequently during an insertion or an exfiltration it is not



(Commandos de Reconnaissance bet d'Action en Profonduet — reconnaissance and deep penetration commandos) of the regiment.

possible to set up a tent or sleep in a barn.

Because a recon team, after jumping in or insertion by helicopter, moves only on foot until recovery, good footgear is essential. Even though the "Rangers" regulation French army boots are more durable, certain teams prefer Adidas hiking boots, which are comfortable, lighter, and most important, waterproof.

Lately, Danner laced combat boots have been tested and seem to combine all the best qualities of jump boots and marching shoes, and thus will be adopted by the recon teams.

The basic tool of a recon team member living without any outside supply is his pack. It must carry everything required for the mission and the life support of its carrier. A team cannot call the CP for a helicopter resupply in the midst of an action. Hence the backpack has been particularly well tested and studied.

With an average loaded weight of 117 pounds (the record is 172 pounds), two types are in use. The frame pack, with a metal frame, is issued to recon teams classified as "normal" and used in more than 90% of exercises and operations.

The SOGH (Saut Operationnel a Grande Hauteur — High Altitude Operational Jump) pack is more flexible since it lacks the metal frame, is lighter and of smaller dimensions: It is used as the individual pack for high-altitude jumps. This is reserved for the CRAPs

(Commandos de Reconnaissance bet d'Action en Profonduet — reconnaissance and deep penetration commandos) of the regiment.

stationed at Langenargen in Germany.

In French and British cavalry or tank units, a squadron is equivalent to a company, while a regiment is equivalent to an infantry battalion. In 1963 13th Regiment also acquired its present, highly specialized mission.

### Penetrate, Observe, Report

The mission of the 13th, unique in the French army, is to jump behind enemy lines (they also use helicopter, vehicular, water, and even march insertion), then observe, collect and transmit intelligence information — all with complete secrecy and in a minimum of time. For close to 30 years, the regiment has been concentrating on and refining the varied techniques and expertise required for this exacting mission.

For 14 years the regiment's current mission was entirely directed toward the Warsaw Pact threat in central Europe. This included earning the astonished admiration of American forces during

repeated participation in Reforger exercises, beginning in 1973.

In November 1977, for the first time since coming to Dieuze and getting their present mission, the 13th sent eight recon teams to Mauritania to support the effort against the *Polisario* rebels, which they did with notable success for about two years. Since then, they have been active in most of the other French involvements in Africa, from Kolwezi in 1980 through Rwanda in 1991.

What makes the 13th unique? About 30 years ago, shortly after getting their present mission, they addressed the question, "what is the best location for observation — in the trees, in a vehicle or on the ground?" The answer came from the Vietnamese and their underground hideouts. Burying yourself permits total camouflage, provides protection from small-arms fire and shell fragments, and allows a long stay with some shelter from the elements.

It also requires a very special kind of

physical and psychological toughness to jump in at night, infiltrate with a rucksack weighing more than 110 pounds and put out the physical effort required to dig a hideout with pick and shovel — all of this silently, even in rocky terrain. It also takes a unique kind of stamina to then stay put for up to two weeks in a muddy hole, observing and reporting on the enemy's activities. It is not a mission for everybody.

### Specialists — Professionals

Their specialized craft requires extensive training. For instance, the regiment takes one year to train a radio operator for a recon team. The intelligence and educational levels are very high in the regiment. Officers and enlisted men tend to stay with the regiment for 10 to 15 years or longer.

This involves 50- to 60-hour weeks and spending more than one-third of a year in

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# AMBUSHED

**T**HE following paragraphs are grisly, but they are necessary to explain the callous attitude of CBS News toward the cold-blooded murder of two young FBI agents. Even in the dry language of an appeals court decision, the description is ghastly.

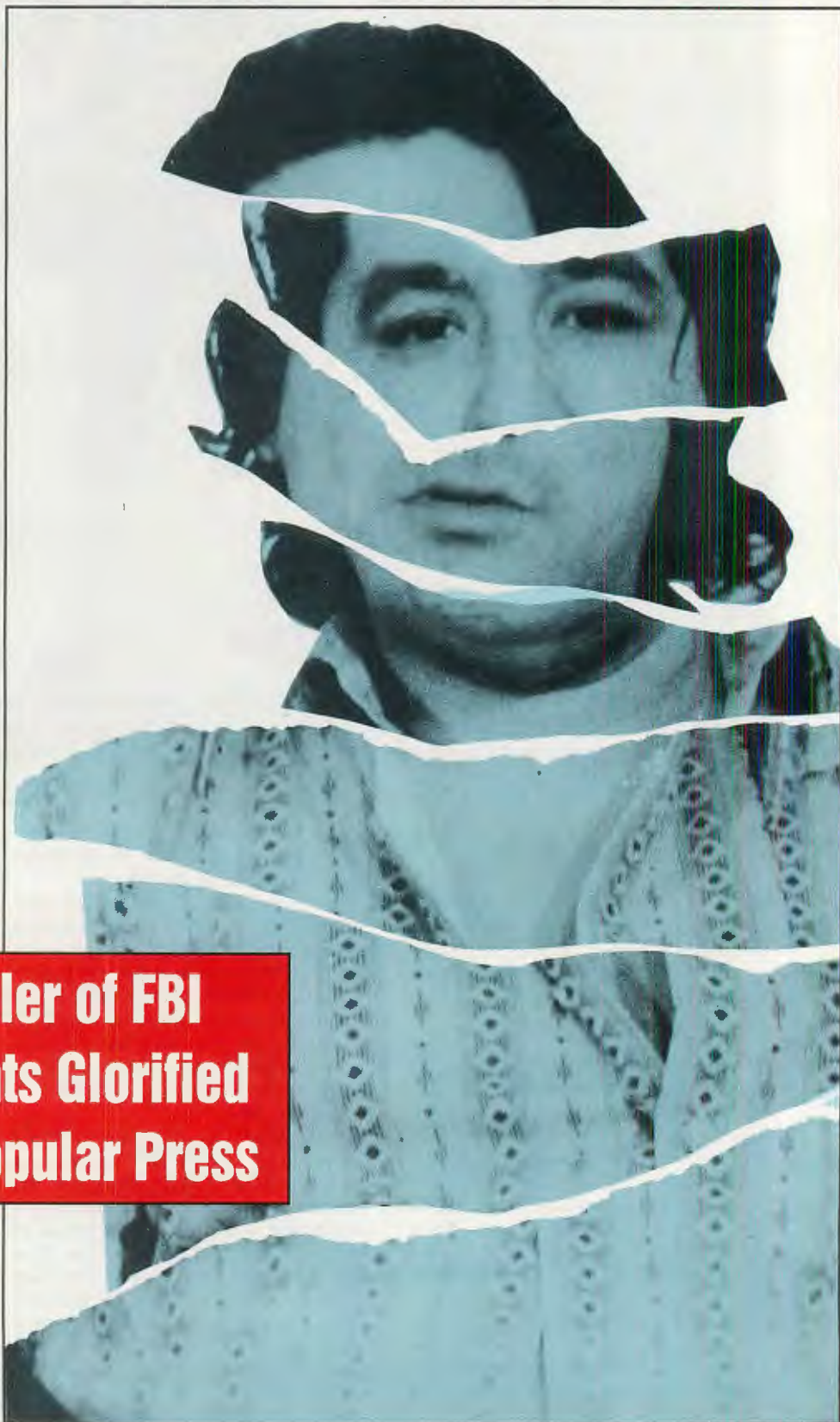
Agents Jack Coler and Ronald Williams, both in their 20s, drove into an ambush on the Pine Ridge Indian reservation at midday on 26 June 1975. The first fusillade of bullets almost tore off Coler's arm; Williams, although gravely wounded in his shoulder and side, managed to remove his shirt and make a tourniquet for his unconscious friend.

Michael Anderson, a member of the radical American Indian Movement, watched organization leader Leonard Peltier and two other men walk down the hill to the agents, who lay helpless on the ground. Trial testimony was that Peltier was the only man on the reservation that day with an AR-15, the civilian version of the M16, a high-velocity semiautomatic rifle. He repeatedly fired at the agents at point-blank range.

According to the appeals court summary of the testimony, "Williams attempted to shield his face from the blast with his right hand, turning his head slightly to the right. The murderer placed the barrel of his gun against Williams' hand and fired. The bullet ripped through Williams' hand, into his face, and carried away the back of his head. He was killed instantly.

"The murderer shot Coler, who was unconscious, across the top of his head. The bullet carried away part of his forehead at the hairline. The shot was not fatal, however. The murderer then lowered his rifle a few inches and shot Coler through the jaw. The shell exploded inside his head, killing him instantly."

This carnage was not mentioned by correspondent Steve Kroft of CBS News when he did pieces on Peltier on the now-defunct "West 57th" broadcast in April 1989 and again on "60 Minutes" on 22 September 1991. The markedly similar segments were both titled, "Last Sioux Brave." They lionized Peltier and argued that he is a "political prisoner" comparable to Nelson Mandela;



**Killer of FBI  
Agents Glorified  
by Popular Press**



# BY CBS

adding that he was convicted on trumped-up evidence.

Kroft's "compassion" for the murdered agents consisted of brief flashes of their photographs on the TV screen. His narration in both segments strongly implied the agents were on the reservation unnecessarily. CBS had not a word of sympathy for the two men slaughtered as they lay helpless on the ground. But Kroft gushed with sympathy for Peltier, their convicted murderer.

## Political Prisoners

"Political prisoners are perhaps the ultimate symbols of governments gone astray," Kroft pontificated in 1989. "Men and women with dangerous or unpopular ideas, who may have been unfairly tried and imprisoned for who they are and what they believe and not necessarily for the crimes they are supposed to have committed ... Americans are accustomed to looking abroad for them, although much of the world believes some of them exist right here."

Dubbing Peltier a "political prisoner" means that Kroft — and CBS — accepted unblinkingly a Soviet propaganda lie that U.S. far-leftists have eagerly helped spread. Kroft was aware of the Soviet campaign; his "West 57th" segment showed scenes from a Red Square rally for Peltier, and he noted that 15 million Soviet signatures have gone to the White House on Peltier's behalf. He showed three men speaking in Russian who were apparently agreeing that Peltier got a bum rap. "In the spirit of *glasnost*," Kroft said, "we thought it was time someone examined his case."

Peltier was tried by a jury in a North Dakota venue of his choice. Appeals that he did not receive a fair trial have been repeatedly heard, and rejected, by the 8th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals and the U.S. Supreme Court. Peltier's well-financed legal team is led by radical luminary William Kunstler. Nonetheless, Kroft and producer James Stolz, who did the reporting for both segments, persist in the notion that prosecutorial chicanery fouled the case.

Lynn E. Crooks, an assistant U.S. attorney in Fargo, North Dakota, who has lived with the Peltier case for 16 years, wrote "60 Minutes" this past September to protest the "totally irresponsible" reporting it did on Peltier. Crooks documented the many errors in the piece.

In response, Stolz had the grace to admit

his bias. Stolz wrote that it was "our conclusion" that Peltier "did not receive the very best that the American justice system offers its citizens" and that "there is clearly a very probable chance that he will die in prison without having gotten a truly fair shake from the American legal system."

Given that Stolz (and correspondent Kroft) went into the Peltier affair with an established viewpoint — rather than letting facts establish the story line — we are not surprised that their segments contained factual inaccuracies, and misrepresented the prosecution case.

The Peltier case came two years after the American Indian Movement seized government buildings at the Wounded Knee reservation in South Dakota and stood off federal agents for days. After this bloody confrontation, Peltier and other militants moved to Pine Ridge, a few miles distant, and even Kroft admitted that their camp bristled with weapons.

Coler and Williams, driving separate cars, were in the reservation area looking for four Indians who were charged with armed robbery and assault with a deadly weapon. They had been told that one of the wanted men, James Eagle, was riding in a red vehicle. They followed a red and white van into the reservation. Peltier was also in the vehicle, although the agents' radio transmissions did not indicate they recognized him.

Peltier had good reason to avoid FBI agents. He had been charged in Milwaukee with attempted murder and had skipped bail, and the FBI had him on its wanted list. When captured in Canada in 1976, Peltier told Canadian officers that he shot the FBI agents because they were going to arrest him.

Kroft gave none of this information in either of his CBS reports. Both times he claimed the agents "ostensibly" went on the reservation to arrest "a young Indian" who had stolen a pair of cowboy boots. "Ostensibly" was Kroft's code word for saying he thought

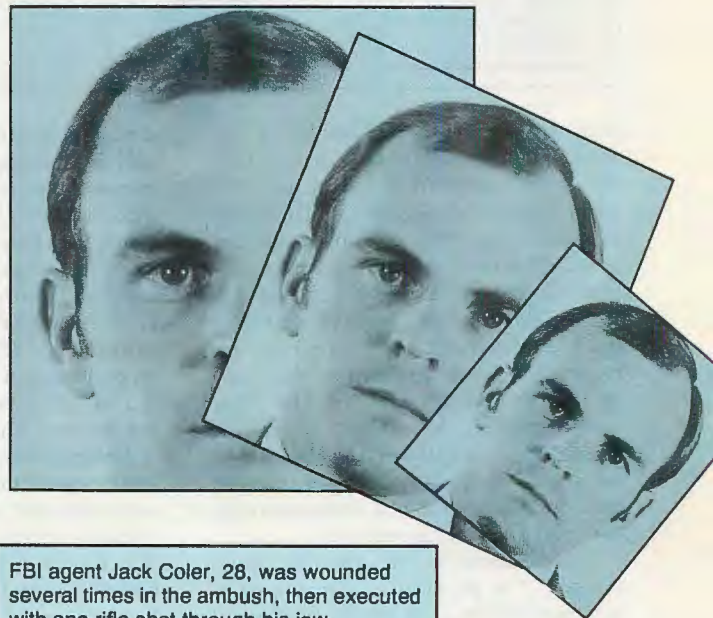
that the FBI account was not credible; his false reason for their going onto the reservation implies the shootings resulted from a triviality.

## Five Bullet Shoot-Out?

In both of his reports, Kroft repeatedly spoke of a "shoot-out" between the Indians and the two agents. "Ambush" would be the more accurate word. According to an appeals court decision which summarized trial testimony, "the agents took heavy fire. Over 125 bullet holes were found in their cars. *In contrast, only five shell casings attributed to the agents' guns were ever found at the scene.*" After the agents were disabled, Peltier and the other two men went down the hill. When they left, the agents' heads had been blown off.

As federal agents swarmed over the reservation, the Indian radicals scattered. One group loaded a car with weapons, including the AR-15 said to have been wielded by Peltier, and headed south. On 10 September 1975, this car exploded on the Kansas Turnpike, and police recovered an arsenal of explosives and weapons — including Peltier's AR-15.

Peltier and others, meanwhile, fled in a motor home and a station wagon. Oregon State Police stopped them on 14 November and Peltier fired at the officers and escaped. Fourteen firearms were found in the motor home, eight of them with obliterated serial numbers.



FBI agent Jack Coler, 28, was wounded several times in the ambush, then executed with one rifle shot through his jaw.



Among them was Agent Coler's revolver, in a paper bag bearing Peltier's thumbprint. The vehicle also contained paraphernalia for manufacturing bombs.

Canadian police finally caught Peltier on 17 February 1976. He had a .30-30 rifle stolen from a farm in Oregon, two pistols and an M1 semiautomatic rifle. He told the officers that if he had known they were police, "he would blow [them] out of [their] shoes."

Robert Robideau and Darrell Butler, the Indian activists who had been with Peltier at the murder scene, were tried in a change of venue in Iowa. According to a post-trial FBI memo, the judge systematically

overwhelming, and he received two life sentences.

The thrust of both CBS segments was that the FBI and the prosecution withheld or doctored evidence in their zeal to convict Peltier. In both reports, Kroft put great weight on a woman named Myrtle Poor Bear, who had a long history of alcoholism and mental instability. She initially told the FBI that she saw Peltier do the shooting. Her statements were used as part of the prima facie case used to get Peltier extradited from Canada. Eventually, as prosecutor Crooks told Kroft, he and his colleagues realized that Poor Bear was a "fruitcake" because of

her conflicting statements and would not be used as a trial witness.

"But when she tried to testify for the Peltier defense," Kroft said on the "60 Minutes" segment, "the judge ruled her incompetent."

Wrong. In actuality, Peltier's lawyers knew of Poor Bear's conflicting statements and they chose not to call her as a witness, although they could have done so. One Peltier lawyer described her in his opening statement as a "witness whose mental imbalance is so gross as to render her testimony unbelievable."

Prosecutor Crooks wrote Stolz after the "60 Minutes" piece, "the inference was that this recanted testimony was

crucial to the finding of guilt and had been initially fabricated by the FBI. Every person to whom I have talked after your piece ran; friend, foe and disinterested, has stated they received that impression. You knew that was not true; Myrtle Poor Bear did not testify before the jury. Her affidavits were relevant only to the issue of extradition." The 8th Circuit Court of Appeals agreed that the Poor Bear issue did not affect Peltier's conviction. So did the Supreme Court.

However much of a "fruitcake" Poor Bear proved to be, the veracity of her statements did not affect the legality of Peltier's extradition. When a person flees the United States to avoid trial, he becomes a legal outlaw subject to capture by any ruse the government can contrive. As the Supreme Court stated in a 1952

case, "there is nothing in the Constitution that requires a guilty person rightfully convicted to escape justice because he was brought to trial against his will."

Peltier's conviction made him a martyr to the hard left, and radical lawyer William Kunstler took charge of his appeals.

### Kunstler To The Rescue

Through Freedom of Information Act requests, Kunstler got bales of documents from FBI files — including a ballistics report which he and CBS, but no one else, considered as proof of prosecutorial misconduct.

The report dealt with some of the hundreds of .223 rifle casings found near the scene. This ammunition is used in the AR-15, which witnesses testified that Peltier brandished during the murders. The shell casings came into the FBI lab over a period of weeks and were examined by ballistics expert Evans Hodge. Peltier's rifle had been recovered from the exploded auto on the Kansas Turnpike, but so badly burned that it was not in firing condition. The bolt itself was not damaged, so an FBI expert put it into another rifle for tests.

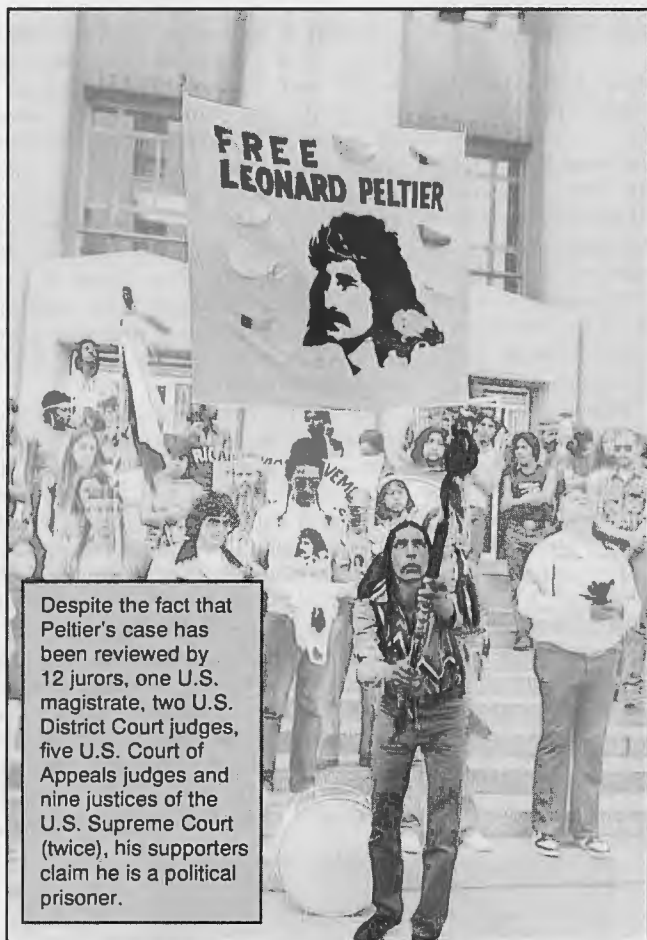
On 2 October 1975, as the shells continued to arrive at the FBI lab, Hodges sent a teletype message: "Recovered .223 caliber Colt rifle ... contains different firing pin than that in rifle used at resmurs [reservation murders] scene." On 31 October, Hodge wrote a report in which he used more specific language. He stated that the AR-15 could not be positively matched with any of the casings which had been tested at that time, based on firing pin comparisons.

However, Hodge stated that markings on the cartridges proved that some of the casings had been loaded into and extracted from Peltier's AR-15. The FBI concluded that after the shootings, but before recovery of the rifle, the firing pin had been changed (a simple task for a gunsmith) but the extractor had not been replaced. The extractor marks are also distinctive and can be used for identification.

During pretrial discovery, Peltier's lawyers obtained the 31 October memo. But the 2 October memo was held back by prosecutors on the grounds that it was preliminary and that its contents were incorporated into the 31 October memorandum. During the appeals, Peltier's lawyers got the early memo under the Freedom of Information Act, using it to claim that the FBI had withheld crucial evidence.

CBS's Kroft agreed with the defense, saying withholding the 2 October memo was the major "fabrication of evidence" by the FBI. He devoted much of both of his segments to the ballistics dispute.

But prosecutor Crooks told Kroft that he was wrong, that the 31 October memo, which the defense had, contained the same information as the 2 October memo. Indeed, Crooks said with a smile, the



excluded evidence favorable to the prosecution, including shell casings from the agents' revolvers found in the cabin where Butler was arrested. The judge imposed a gag order on prosecutors, but permitted defense lawyers "uncontrolled" access to the media. The jury, which was not sequestered, "had available numerous headlines adverse to the government, and the results of daily conferences with news media by defense counsel." The judge even permitted the Church Committee report on alleged FBI and CIA abuses to be used as evidence, over strong prosecution objections as to relevancy. Unsurprisingly, both defendants were acquitted.

Peltier chose to be tried in North Dakota. The physical evidence against him, plus testimony of former members of the American Indian Movement, was



prosecution was waiting to see when "they hit us with that." But the defense did not make effective use of the 31 October memo. "They never mentioned the stupid thing," Crooks said. "They didn't use their best evidence."

Crooks told Kroft (in an interview segment that was not aired) that the October memoranda were irrelevant anyway, since other ballistics evidence confirmed that the bullets come from Peltier's rifle. The trial court gave Peltier an evidentiary hearing on the "new" evidence, and Judge Paul Benson ruled that it was insufficient to change the verdict. The 8th Circuit Court of Appeals agreed, saying the material did not warrant a new trial. So did the Supreme Court.

### Suspicious "Mystery Witness"

With Peltier's legal avenues exhausted, Kunstler and other supporters are trying a new propaganda approach: producing a masked figure, "Mister X," who claims he, and not Peltier, killed the FBI agents.

Mister X and his scenario smack of a publicity stunt, and one overriding fact makes him irrelevant: He refuses to identify himself, although Peltier and other movement members claim to know him. Further, he says he feels no guilt for shooting the agents and does not believe he deserves to go to prison, but if subpoenaed will deny that he did it. Nonetheless, the gullible Kroft gave much airtime to this man's nonsense on "60 Minutes" in September. Kroft said that the man's story is "a secret Leonard Peltier and others have carried with them for 15 years."

### **Kunstler and other supporters are trying a new propaganda approach: producing a masked figure, "Mister X," who claims he, and not Peltier, killed the FBI agents.**

Mister X first surfaced last spring via author Peter Matthiessen, whose book *In The Spirit of Crazy Horse* is a paean to Peltier. Matthiessen wrote about Mister X's claim in *The Nation* on 13 May 1991. He also taped an interview with Mister X which was shown on "60 Minutes." Kroft said that CBS bought the film from an independent company and "cannot vouch for its accuracy." The man was shown heavily masked, and he appeared to be using a speech modification device.

Mister X told Kroft that he was in a truck bringing explosives to the Indian movement's camp. In *The Nation* he said they were "for use in making hand grenades and other weapons," and that he

got them at the request of Peltier and Darrell Butler (one of the two acquitted defendants). Kroft did not mention Peltier. Linking him to such activities would not help "60 Minutes" generate sympathy for Peltier among its viewers.

Mister X said that two cars followed his truck onto the reservation and stopped. He said he and his friends got out and displayed semiautomatic weapons, whereupon two men jumped out of the cars and began shooting.

We are expected to believe that the FBI agents, armed only with handguns, would start firing at men 150 to 200 yards distant who were armed with high-powered rifles. Nonetheless, Kroft said, "it was the beginning of the hour-long shoot-out." This is wrong: The agents' radio transmissions ceased within minutes.

Mister X claimed he drove the truck around a hill to get his explosives out of harm's way. When the shooting stopped, he returned and saw that the agents "were out of commission." He walked down to them, he said, to get them to "surrender."

Mister X: "I advanced a few feet and I was right [at] point-blank range. There was one who was on the ground. He raised up what I would consider quickly, bringing up a pistol, which he fired. He fired it at kind of an angle where it went into the ground. At that point I did not give him a chance to fire again. I fired. As soon as I shot him, I immediately, instantaneously, fired at the other fellow and hit him also." Medical testimony was that both men were helpless.

Kroft said that Mister X thinks that if he comes forward, the FBI will arrest him but that "the government will still keep Peltier in prison." He is probably right, because the evidence against Peltier for "aiding and abetting" the killings is even stronger than the murder case.

### Fair Shake From The System?

In defending his work, producer Stolz said the "60 Minutes" segment was done because "there was a chance that Peltier in fact *did not receive the very best* that the American criminal justice system offers its citizens."

Prosecutor Crooks calls this assertion "absurd." He says Peltier "got far more than most criminal defendants get ... he got not just one court-appointed, chosen-by-rotation lawyer, but five lawyers, all chosen by himself (two as trial counsel, and three more as 'investigators'). His attorneys got to participate in questioning the jury, something which rarely occurs in federal court, and has happened only once in the 23 years I have been a federal

prosecutor. He got almost double the number of peremptory challenges normally given. He got a daily copy of the transcript — an extremely expensive proposition.

"Upon conviction, he was again allowed to fire his original trial lawyers and retain appellate counsel of his choice, to be paid at government expense. Upon filing his motion for new trial, he was ultimately given the right to a hearing, something which occurs rarely in habeas



During a 1986 trip to the former Soviet Union, Stephanie Peltier (Leonard's wife) tells a Moscow news conference that Peltier was unjustly convicted of killing two FBI agents in 1975.

corpus cases ...

"Thus far, Mr. Peltier has had various parts of his case reviewed by 12 jurors, one United States magistrate, two United States District Court judges, five United States Court of Appeals judges, and nine justices of the United States Supreme Court (twice). In my opinion, Mr. Peltier has been given more than a 'fair shake' from the American judicial system," Crooks noted.

Nonetheless, Peltier's cause has now been taken up by Sen. Daniel Inouye (D-Hawaii, who has asked President Bush to consider pardoning the murderer — "Twelve years in prison is enough") and such FBI-haters as Rep. Don Edwards (D-Calif.). Circuit Judge Ross Heaney, who found no legal justification to grant Peltier a new trial, also feels the killer should be freed.

Kroft ended his "60 Minutes" report with the assertion that Indians feel that Peltier, "like Sitting Bull and Crazy Horse, is the latest martyr to their people." He displayed no sign of sympathy for the two young FBI agents who died in their country's service, murdered in cold blood by the man CBS elevates as a role model for young American Indians.

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# CONTRA-BANDITOS

## Airborne Smugglers Run Mexican Gauntlet for Fun and Profit

Text & Photos by Ron Fox



For this trip, the author's T-Bone 1955 C-50 Twin Bonanza was packed from floor to ceiling with television sets; he had to squeeze in between them.

I had just stepped out on the wing of my plane, happy to have landed safely on the short grass strip, when I heard two shots in quick succession.

My ground-crew chief, Julian, looked to his right and admonished his crew in Spanish, as if to tell them to knock it off. Somebody must be trigger happy.

Three seconds later, the entire strip erupted into gunfire. Shots were coming from every direction — returned by the crew on the ground. Mexicans started screaming and scattering like rabbits in every direction.

I dove for the seat of my plane and

quickly switched on both engine magnetos, advanced both throttles to maximum and reached for the starter switches. I felt bullets hitting the plane and glanced to my right through the open door.

Not 10 paces from my right wing was a man dressed in khakis and a black baseball cap, pointing a carbine at me, shooting. I figured the jig was up and, not three blades into my start, I raised my hands in surrender.

The Iguana (customs agent) off my right wing lowered his carbine. The thwacking of bullets against my plane stopped, but gunfire continued all over the strip. Trucks

were roaring away, Mexicans still ran in all directions, but this old movie was over for me.

**T**

his trip started out like dozens of others I'd taken since I'd been in the smuggling business. When I pulled out onto the tarmac at 0230, the eerie silence of the Brownsville, Texas, airport was broken only by the mournful



cry of a night bird and the occasional yap of a coyote.

My 1955 C-50 Twin Bonanza, affectionately known as a "T-Bone," had half-flat tires, indicating a heavy load. The whole plane was packed like a jigsaw puzzle from floor to ceiling with contraband consumer goods I was flying to Mexico.

At full power, I muttered "Geronimo," and released the brakes. With agonizing slowness I began to pick up speed — 50 mph ... 55 ... 60 ... 85 ... 90 ... 95 ... With the end of the runway's red lights coming up fast, my plane finally stopped shuddering — I was off the ground. One by one, I doused the lights — landing lights, navigation lights, rotating beacon — and I disappeared into the blackness of night, leaving only a trail of sound behind me. I headed due south, out into the Gulf of Mexico

Scanning just above the horizon for my favorite star group, the Southern Cross constellation, I pointed the nose straight at it. This stellar sparkle has guided me above the clouds on many lonely nights, and I nodded as if in recognition of an old friend.

After several hours, the sky on the eastern horizon began to pale. As the 8,000-foot ridge east of Jalapa glided by, I pulled a little power and started a slow descent. I had drifted too close to the coast, and so had to adjust my course seaward to avoid detection from army and navy bases at Vera Cruz, which would soon be visible further south.

It was time to call Julian on the FM radio and let him know I was inbound. This was an important phase of the mission because it was only now that I would find out if the strip was secure, the weather OK and whether it was safe to land. If I heard the code word "OK" at any time, I would just turn around and head home after telling Julian I had a mechanical problem and couldn't land.

This prearranged code word would tell me if the strip was unsafe, either because of some kind of obstruction, or because someone was holding a gun to Julian's head.

"Julian, this is Blue Star One."

At once the radio crackled back with Julian's familiar voice: "Blue Star One, this is Julian, how far out are you?"

"Twenty minutes. How's the strip?"

"Good, good. See you in 20 minutes."

The radio was alive now with Spanish chatter; Julian barking orders and questions, many voices answering. *Julian must be checking the strip's defense perimeter.* Walkie-talkies abounded with more chatter on our discreet frequency; everything seemed normal.

Twenty miles past Vera Cruz, I pulled back on the power and turned inland. I saw



the lake that was just a few miles south of my strip and the highway running south out of Vera Cruz. I began scanning the ground in front of me for my visual checkpoints: a five-story grain silo, then a burned-out shell of a barn. I turned due east. After another minute of looking intently for the strip, I saw it — there ... there was the pineapple field adjacent to my cow pasture. There were the trucks, with Julian's bright red one gleaming in the morning light.

I dropped down low for my first pass over the strip, searching the area for anything out of the ordinary: extra trucks too far from the strip, extra people out of normal position, khaki uniforms or uniforms of any kind — anything strange. It looked good. With weather like this and a gentle breeze, the 2,700-foot strip posed no problem. I couldn't land with the wind at my back or if the grass were very wet. At the north end of the strip was a barbed wire fence; at the south end, a rock bordered creek. No overruns allowed here.

I hit the approach end of the strip just north of the rocks, bringing up my flaps to put more weight onto the main wheels. I started heavy braking immediately and was relieved to feel myself slowing.

At the end of the strip I came around and faced south, shutting off the engines. At last I could relax, wipe my eyes, yawn, stretch and heave a sigh of relief. It would all be downhill from here.

Immediately, two young men jumped up on my right wing. The grinning Mexicans pulled one big TV set out and then another, passing them down the wing to eager hands formed in a line to load the trucks. The young man stepped aside to let me out. As I climbed out, I saw two men already pouring gas into my outboard fuel tank through a large funnel stuck in the top of my right wing.

#### Nine Years Of Self-Improvement

Seconds later, the gunfire started and I found myself surrendering. As I sat there

DC-3s were favorites for *contrabandito* work along the border. Pilots were guys who, for one reason or another, couldn't find aviation work but wanted to keep flying.

with my hands in the air I thought to myself, "well, now I'll be able to do at least four things I've always wanted to accomplish: learn to speak Spanish, write a book, lose weight and learn to play the guitar. And it should only take nine years to do all that."

But then, not three seconds after lowering his carbine, the Iguana raised his gun and started shooting at me again. Hell, I thought, if this bastard is going to keep shooting, I'm going to keep escaping.

I reached over, yelling an appropriate phrase, and slammed the door. I fell over on the seat, raising my left hand and cranking both engines. I wondered what a bullet up the ass would feel like as rounds once again began thumping into the plane. Suddenly, the right engine roared to life. I felt the airplane lurch to the left, swinging its tail toward my attacker. Quickly, I raised my right foot over my left leg and stomped on the right brake. This was no time to be going in circles — or was it?

**M**y left engine sparked to life in just a few seconds and, ramming the left mixture forward, I let go of everything and just lay on the seat. With rounds still hitting the airplane and glass from TV picture tubes flying all over the cabin, I began to move, noticing the strange smell of whatever gases used to be inside those TV sets.

By this time, the strip was practically empty of people, at least near me. I sat up, crouching as low as I could, steering the plane toward the south end of the strip. Almost one-third of the strip was behind me now, and I still had a full load on the airplane. I didn't know if it would be



## THE SMUGGLING GAME

The business of flying consumer goods (contraband) into Mexico to avoid the outrageous 100% Mexican import duties started as soon as airplanes were put into commercial service. After import duties were paid, a TV set costing \$500 in Brownsville, Texas, sold for \$1,200 in Mexico. Receivers in Mexico paid smugglers \$1 per pound, then sold the contraband for about three-fourths what it would cost retail, making a good profit for themselves.

Pilots smuggling consumer goods into Mexico were known as *contrabanditos*, earning from \$800 to \$1,000 per flight. Those who chose this form of employment had to know the limits of their aircraft and themselves. They operated under the most adverse conditions — in unknown weather, flying overloaded, old, unreliable aircraft without navigational aids to extremely marginal landing strips.

Mexico's eastern coast, from the border to the Bay of Campeche, is littered with the hulks of wrecked aircraft which, for one reason or another, didn't complete their missions.

While Mexican law was being broken through smuggling goods into Mexico, U.S. laws were strictly observed. Pilots flying into Mexico would first file export declarations and cargo manifests with the U.S. Customs Service, having their aircraft and cargoes inspected both going out and coming into the United States. Federal aviation regulations were also strictly observed, as far as filing flight plans with the federal Flight Service Stations and observing correct procedures for penetrating Air Defense Identification Zones. It was understood on the border that pilots would risk their lives but not their pilot's certificates.

Mexico's endemic corruption in every facet of government was exploited by the owners of these fly-by-night operations and the receivers of merchandise. State governors, state police chiefs, federal customs officials, airport *comandantes* and tower operators, local police, politicians and airport workers — all had their hands out in this lucrative business. Refusing to pay tribute resulted in high risk for pilots — they were jumped at strips, shot down by customs aircraft, or their airplanes were sabotaged by unknown persons.

The official penalty for being caught at this trade was nine years in a

Mexican jail. Yet few, if any, of those caught spent more than a few months incarcerated. They learned from those experienced in the trade to save income from first trips in a safe place, where a trusted friend could get to it to buy them out of jail. This could cost between \$10,000 — \$50,000, depending on where they were caught, who did the holding and how fast they wanted to get home. Many pilots were captured and released numerous times.

Until the 1982 collapse of Mexico's economy, this was a gentleman's game. Pilots and arresting authorities rarely carried weapons. If pilots gave themselves up without a struggle and behaved, their treatment was usually quite good. For about \$200 per month, they could live quite well in special wings of many prisons with air conditioning, laundry and maid services, newspapers and many privileges. Local authorities knew a good thing when they saw it.

After 1982, getting dollars out of Mexico became very difficult. Receivers usually could only pay for an operator's services with *pesos* and, in the time it took to get to a bank, their value could drop by half. Smuggling operations were drastically reduced, while competition between operators became nasty and cutthroat.

Suddenly pilots started carrying guns, not just personal protection handguns, but serious heavy-caliber automatic weapons. Strips became armed fortresses with receivers willing to kill to protect their goods. All of a sudden it was no longer a gentleman's game, but a deadly serious business. Many of the old-timers, such as ex-Air America veterans experienced in this sort of flying, got out of it.

This left the business to those less experienced who were willing to take more chances, so the number of strip accidents increased dramatically as did the number of tragic incidents at the point of capture.

In 1989, changes to Mexican customs law virtually eliminated an aviation smuggling industry that had been strong for more than a half-century. Now the story can be told without danger to those involved. It should be understood, however, that the best stories probably died with those who would have told them.

— R.F.

whizzing through my plane or not. I was unaware of anything except the upcoming creek and my ever-so-slowly increasing airspeed.

### Airspeed 50 MPH — Creek Just Ahead

Wide-eyed, I checked my airspeed again, then the creek, then the airspeed. I didn't even blink between the two. Airspeed 50 mph — creek getting closer. My heart was pounding; I was breathing fast. Airspeed 55 — the nose felt lighter so I let it down a little. The creek was now less than 1,000 feet ahead.

My mind was racing — would I need 90 mph to fly? Eighty? After using almost four hours of fuel, how close to max gross



Bullet embedded in left prop blade. If the prop hadn't stopped it, the round would have struck the cockpit, and perhaps the author.

weight was I? I needed to lower the nose more to reduce the drag of my wings, but I couldn't afford to let my flat nose tire drag me down.

**A**irspeed 65 mph — the creek was coming up fast now, maybe 500 feet to go. It didn't feel good: I needed more lift. The flaps! Put down the flaps! Only a couple of seconds before I would hit the creek.

What the hell, die from a bullet or die in a plane crash. I've crashed planes before; nothin' to it. It didn't even hurt; it hurts when you wake up, if you do, but by then you're so happy to be alive you don't care if it hurts. But a bullet? Never been shot before ... must hurt. I had to get off the ground.

At the last possible moment, I lowered the nose for just a second, then pulled the yoke all the way back into my gut with my left hand, my right hand on the throttles, bending them forward in full power. The nose came up high off the ground. Braced for the jolt of snagging rocks and ready to react instantly to the resulting swerve in

possible to get off the ground.

Suddenly the nose gear started to shudder violently. The nose tire must have caught a bullet. How would I ever make it out of here now? Sitting straight up, I pulled the yoke all the way back into my lap and the nose came up a little and quit shuddering.

I planted both feet squarely on the rudder pedals and pushed myself firmly

back into the seat. Shaking my head, I blinked my eyes and looked at the airspeed indicator. That old faded white needle was bouncing a bit, right around the 40 mph mark. I looked outside, directly in front of my windshield. Half the strip was behind me, while a creek bank of rocks was not 1,500 feet ahead.

I didn't notice if there were people around anymore, or if any bullets were



zip by in a blur.

I grabbed the landing gear handle and threw it up. I jerked the yoke left, then right, trying to counteract its wallowing almost out of control. I must have been mowing grass south of that creek — lucky for me there was only grass out there.

For some reason, I looked out at my right wing just as a 12-inch funnel popped out of its surface and disappeared to my rear. Now a steady white flow of gasoline escaped my fuel tank.

Looking over my panel at the ground ahead — I dared not look at anything else — I was only reacting now to visual stimuli, much like a video game. I was not aware of pushing, pulling or turning yoke, nor of pushing the rudder pedals left or right. I dared not take my eyes off the blessedly flat terrain ahead. Yet out of the corner of my eye, I noticed the plane's big red stall-light beginning to blink.

**M**y airspeed *must* be increasing; I quickly glanced down. I was doing 85 mph. With this plane normally loaded, I should be flying fine at 65. This heavy, I was lucky to be flying at all at 85. Finally, the stall light went off, the airplane slowly stopped wallowing, and at last I could gingerly raise the nose and begin climbing as I headed back north for the Gulf and home.

I scanned gauges on the instrument panel. Had a bullet punctured an oil line? Everything seemed fine except the shaking of my knees and hands. What a great time for a cigarette. That's right; both hands on the lighter, a big drag on my Marlboro, a heavy sigh of relief as I exhaled. Whew! That was a close one.

“Aw, Shit!”

Suddenly there was a loud growl and vibration as my engines just stopped — both of them. I was suddenly in complete silence, with only the faint whistling of wind audible as my mind returned to high gear. Two words escaped from my lips, the two last words usually

Pilots were paid by the pound, and they jammed as much cargo as they could into their aircraft. A DC-3 like the one below, loaded with cigarettes, was shot down 100 miles from Brownsville, Texas.



“Aw, shit!”

I grabbed for the fuel selectors on the floor of the cockpit, returning my engine-fuel feeds to tanks still holding fuel. There was no longer a white stream of fuel escaping from the top of my right wing — it was empty. I turned on my electric fuel-boost pumps and waited for the fuel to reach my engines.

Just as suddenly as they had stopped, my engines sputtered to life. Smoothly

## RISKY BUSINESS

**D**uring my one year on the border, the company I was working for lost seven aircraft and four pilots.

A Beech 18 carrying electronics and a DC-3 with cigarettes were both shot down within 100 miles of Brownsville, Texas; the pilot of the Beech survived a crash landing on the beach. Another Beech 18 crashed into a mountaintop in the fog just west of Jalapa. Its pilot survived five months in a Mexican hospital before being smuggled out of the country.

A Cessna 402 crashed in the sagebrush of a makeshift strip just south of Mexico City. Its pilot made his way back to Brownsville on a bus. A Beech Baron was lost in tall grass on a strip just north of Tampico. A Piper Navajo on its pilot's first trip crashed just off Vera Cruz, probably descending into the water in fog. What was left of the pilot's body washed up on the beach a few days later.

I crashed a Twin Bonanza 50 miles east of Mexico City on a mountain plateau, when I tangled with some power lines while landing on a dirt road. I survived a broken back, a broken leg, and I have a nice scar just above my left eye to remind me of all the fun I had.

During our heyday, more than 75 operators were working the border smuggling consumer goods into Mexico.

— R.F.

applying power, I raised the nose back into a climb, but before I could breathe another sigh of relief I noticed a strange odor. It smelled like smoke. Was it electrical

smoke now, coming from the floor. “Aw, shit!” (Again.) This time it was my cigarette, smoldering on the carpet. This had to stop.

At least I had burned as much gas out of that tank as I could before it all got sucked out. I climbed again, heading north, straight out over the Gulf toward Brownsville. If something went wrong with my plane between here and there, I was going to be some shark's breakfast. I didn't have the fuel to follow the curving coastline back home. What the hell, I had to take my best shot.

I climbed up to 11,000 feet, pulled the props back to minimum speed and the power back to minimum, max-range power. Then I smoked one cigarette after another and marveled at my shaking knees as I concentrated on flying smoothly, to conserve fuel.

Settling down for at least two more hours of cruising, I wondered if I would make it back. I *had* to make it back — this would be the best story I'd ever been able to tell. Then I realized that the best stories probably never get told — they die with their would-be storytellers.

Reliving my experience, I saw how so many things could have gone wrong: a bullet hitting a different spot on the plane; a bullet in me; hitting that creek with my wheels; nicking the ground with my props; a soft spot in the ground when my nose tire went flat. Damn — I almost forgot about the nose tire.

I *did* make it back to Brownsville. After an abrupt stop on the runway, I pulled mixtures back to fuel-cutoff and the engines came to a stop, quiet at last. One by one, I turned off my many switches. The flight was over.

Climbing down the wing onto the runway, I knelt down and kissed the ground. This wasn't the first time I had done so, but I decided it would be the last.

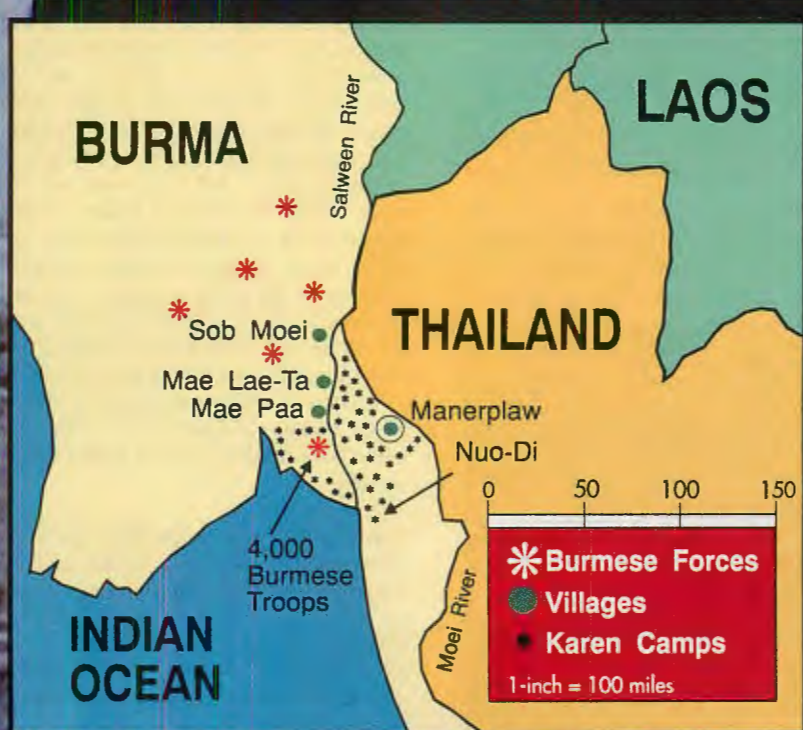
Walking around my plane, I noticed bullet holes all over: one in the right-engine nacelle; three on the cabin's right side; two in the right flap assembly, a hole in my nose tire. All these were on the plane's right side. Then I found a bullet embedded in the metal blade of my left prop, about 3 inches from the hub. Looking at the bullet's angle, I realized someone had fired at me from my left side, too. If the prop blade had not stopped that bullet it might have hit me in the cockpit.

This was my last smuggling trip. Maybe I had finally chickened out — lost my nerve — or maybe I had just gotten a little smarter.

Ron Fox has been a U.S. Navy carrier jet pilot, a bush pilot in Alaska and an island-hopper in the Pacific. Since giving up smuggling goods to Mexico, he has become a “legit” airline pilot, working for an American company that wouldn't appreciate knowing about the exploits described above. ✕



# LAST STA





# ND IN MANERPLAW

## END OF THE LINE FOR KAREN FREEDOM FIGHTERS?

Text & Photos by John Kreiger



# W

hen the 120mm mortar explosion nearly caused me to flip-flop in my hammock, I knew it was time to wake up. Unused to

getting out of a swinging casket at high speed in the dark, my foot went straight into a still-smoldering fire. Five seconds later, I was in a trench crawling for a bunker.

As my head thudded loudly into the teak log ceiling of the bunker while trying to stand up, a kid thought it would be a good time to let off a few rounds from his M16 — you know, to see if it was *really* working.

My eyes wouldn't open, my ears were ringing, my head was pounding, part of my left sock was on fire and the Burmese army was playing with mortars. To the dark shapes surrounding me in the bunker, I

said the first thing that came to mind: "I hate when this happens."

It must have been about 0500 when the mortars hit, as an hour later the sky was just bright enough so that I could see the faces on the dark shapes standing next to me — seven soldiers from the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA). In an elaborate maze of trenches surrounding our bunker were perhaps 20 more young fighters.

I had arrived at this place, a mountain camp called Nuo-Di, late the night before. One second I was sitting in Manerplaw, the Karen National Union (KNU) headquarters, trying to figure out how to get to the front; the next second, armed Karen soldiers hanging out of a beat-up, bashed-in Toyota pickup had skidded to a stop in front of me and were asking if I was ready to go.

Not long after throwing some things in

a bag, I was bouncing wildly in the back of the Toyota, clinging for my life to a thin piece of metal railing. As soon as we got through Manerplaw, the truck began blasting up a gutted jungle trail at what must have been 50 mph, headlights off.

I couldn't see a damned thing it was so dark, and had no idea how the guy driving the truck kept us on the trail (although, judging by the ride, maybe he didn't). Guys flying around next to me were trying desperately to keep their weapons pointed over the side and ready to go. They were not successful.

### Into The Great Wide Open

There comes a time in every adventure trip, I think, when one subconsciously knows one has arrived at a kind of "jumping off" point. When our truck stopped, only 45 minutes later, everything was subtly different. There was an





unsettled, anxious feeling in the air. We had completely left one world and were now in another.

Standing beside the little truck, soldiers were rechecking weapons to make sure they were ready to fire; voices could be heard yelling from distant trenches; from nowhere, we were approached at gunpoint to have our identities checked. The night seemed even darker than before. When someone reached into the truck and handed me an UZI for self-defense, I knew my jumping-off point had arrived.

Six of the 10 soldiers in our group disappeared into the black jungle, while the others and I began climbing up a winding trail. The hike was slippery and steep, and would have been difficult in the daytime; at night, tripping and falling most of the way, it took us hours to reach Nuo-Di.

After dragging into camp, I talked to the Karens for a while, ate some cold rice, fish paste and chilies, then climbed into a hammock. Clouds on their way to somewhere else were beginning to reveal thousands of bright stars, and all was quiet as I closed my eyes, with the exception of the continuous yelling. The next thing I knew, it was noisy and my foot was on fire.

The morning's brief mortar attack had ended when the sun came up, and the only thing I could hear now was sporadic machine-gun fire, probably more than a mile away. After another hour in the bunker, I decided to step outside to take a look around.

I zigzagged through the trench for a couple of moments, then raised my head. Immediately, I was struck by one of the most awesome and beautiful sights I had ever seen. Surrounding us in almost all directions were high, cloud-covered mountains, all very close. Mist was everywhere, and jungle appeared and disappeared so that it was almost funny to watch.

Not so funny were the more immediate surroundings: The Karens had constructed

a seriously lethal camp here at Nuo-Di. Behind me were two rows of barbed wire fences, a minefield between them. Down the mountain a little farther were more bunkers, more fences and more minefields. As the morning mist cleared, I could see similar Karen camps on the mountains around us.

### In The Dark Of The Sun

**A**fter 42 years of fighting oppressive Burmese governments throughout Kawthoolei, the Karen homeland, these little camps now comprised the last defense of Manerplaw, which was not only the KNU headquarters, but also the sole base for several other freedom-fighting organizations in Burma.

The good news was that the Karens had the Burmese surrounded. There were perhaps 40 such camps as Nuo-Di, strung in a rough circle around the mountain the Burmese had recently invaded. The bad news was that the Burmese soldiers outnumbered the Karen soldiers something like 10-to-1. At other times, someone could be heard talking about a 20-1 ratio of soldiers.



Karen soldier, sightless due to mortar explosion, at Karen military hospital on Burmese side of Moei River.

As I was standing in the trench looking around, the leader of this group walked over, a cheroot hanging from the corner of his mouth. Lieutenant Ler Pe Le was a picture of the quintessential guerrilla fighter: strong, only 19 years old, wild-eyed, quiet, and with an aura about him that food, water and sleep were senseless luxuries, things for which he simply had no time.

We talked for a few minutes about what the Burmese might be up to, after which I asked him about all of the yelling that I had heard during the night. "It's our soldiers," he said. "They ask the Burmese to come fight. And they call them many names. Not nice names. I'm

not sure how to explain." He didn't need to. I got the idea.

In our conversation, I learned that the KNLA had two major concerns at this point. One was that the Burmese would attempt to take the highest mountain in the area, Twee Par Wi Kyo. If they were successful, it would enable them to fire artillery directly into Manerplaw.

The other concern was that the Burmese would launch a large-scale offensive across the Salween River, after which they could break into smaller units, sneak through the jungle, then use guerrilla-warfare tactics to begin raising hell on

Manerplaw. If this were to happen, the rats would be out of the bag, so to speak, and since they would be hiding in extremely dense jungle most of the time, they would be very hard rodents to stop.

To ensure that there were no unfriendly species near the Salween, the young lieutenant said he was planning to conduct a patrol down the mountain to take a look. "Please come with us," he said. "If Burmese see foreigner, they know he is journalist, and they shoot. Then we know exactly where they are if they crossed." I laughed, like I thought I was supposed to, but Ler Pe Le was an emotionless brick. I stopped laughing and tried to act casual, thinking about what this meant.

### Welcome To The Jungle

In an offbeat way, I had to admire Ler Pe Le for what he was asking. In essence, he was saying, "as a walking target you could be killed, but people are killed here everyday. Come with us and help us in what we need to do." It was time for me to take a mental inventory. On one hand, I didn't leave a nice job at *Soldier Of Fortune* and fly halfway across the world to be a tourist. On the other hand, I didn't want to die.

**B**y 1000, Karen fighters were putting their things in order for the patrol, and it was time to make a decision. Moments later, as if I needed something to help me make up my mind, which I did, mortars again began falling — not on us, but in the distance, probably near Sob Moei, where the Moei and Salween rivers converge. Hell, I thought, I'm already in this thing pretty deep. I may as well be moving on a trail rather than doing nothing in a trench.

There were nine of us in the patrol, including Ler Pe Le and myself. Our weapons consisted of three M16s, two AK-47s, two G-3s, one UZI and an RPG-7. Only 30 or 40 minutes after I had decided to play foreign target, we were beginning to approach the river. Through cracks in the thick bush, I could see volcano-shaped Twee Par Wi Kyo, the highest mountain. Not far to the left of it was a smaller peak, home to something like 4,000 Burmese troops.

If there had been no jungle and I had thought to bring even a pair of Kiddyland binoculars, I almost would have been able to see what brand of cheroots the Burmese were smoking. As it was, I could only see green nothing, just like everywhere else.

We stopped for a short break, during which noise from across the Salween began to get seriously constant and loud. Someone over there was not happy, and firing his mortars to prove it. Ler Pe Le was on his walkie-talkie, apparently trying to figure out what was going on.

We got up, left our little trail, and started trekking straight through the bush. When we neared the top of a hill overlooking a large expanse of the Salween, the lieutenant signalled for us to stop. I



crouched behind a fallen teak log, lit up a cheroot and looked down at the river.

**D**uring the monsoon season, when I was last in this area, the Salween was a huge, rolling beast, often up to 250 feet in width. Now, in the dry season, it looked like a stream, and was probably no more than 75 feet from bank to bank. But the front was relatively distant when I was last here, and this little stream was much more frightening now than that raging river had been then.

I looked over at Ler Pe Le, who had put down his walkie-talkie and was now staring at the river as I had been, perhaps thinking the same thing. All was quiet now, so I walked over to find out what all of the firing had been about. "Burmese attack," he said. "They send many soldier, but we shoot a little and fire one RPG and they go back."

### Karen Paradox

I smiled. In all of the tragedy of this war, that was the one thing that could really bring a smile. Here the Karen were, scattered ragtag through the jungle, outnumbered as hell, with few weapons and little ammunition, looking right in the face of a giant, cold-blooded army, armed to the betel nut-stained teeth with everything it needed. Yet, the KNLA was the most dangerous force in these hills.

Emotionally, psychologically, and morally, everything was on their side. Even the youngest Karen fighters I talked to, sometimes as young as 14 years old, knew what they were fighting for: freedom, autonomy, democracy and, more recently, the survival of the KNU. They knew of Burmese dissident Aung San Suu Kyi, winner of the 1991 Nobel Peace Prize, and why she won the prize.

Just as important, they knew what they were fighting against; some had personal knowledge. Many Karens, including three on this patrol, were here because this was their home. The Burmese army, on its merry way through Kawthoolei, had burnt their villages to the ground.

Our RPG-7 kid, Lein Zou, speaking through Ler Pe Le, told a story that varied

As prepared as they can be at 15 or 16 years old, Karen soldiers near Manerplaw kick back, waiting for the inevitable.



little from several I had heard before. His sister and mother were raped, his mother and father were then shot, and all young men in his village were forced at gunpoint to be combination porters/human landmine detectors.

His village had been in the Dawna Range, an area I had heard of before. In Martin Smith's recently published 492-page book, *Burma: Insurgency and the Politics of Ethnicity*, the entire 70-mile stretch of the range is described as "a scene of devastation. Dozens of villages had been burnt down, crops confiscated, fields destroyed." Smith estimates that 10,000 people are killed every year in this civil war, with several more tens of thousands wounded.

Amid the confusion of a Burmese firefight with Karens in a part of Kawthoolei I'd never heard of, Lein Zou, along with several ethnic Burmese porters, escaped into the jungle and headed east, toward Manerplaw. The kid voluntarily joined the KNLA; at least some of the Burmese porters eventually joined the All-Burma Students' Democratic Front (ABSDF), based in Manerplaw.



Karen troop armed with AK-47 escorts bizarre foreign media contingent — a Canadian photographer, an Italian who-knows-what, and a former SOF employee — up the Salween River toward the front.

I couldn't get a good interpretation on what happened to the remainder of the Burmese, but my guess is that they were simply freed by the Karen to make their way back to Rangoon (where they would probably again be forced to be porters).

Life is a bitch in Burma, no matter who you are.

The day was still quiet, and the only movement on the river were a few Karen villagers who chose to live dangerously, transporting vegetables by long-tail boat to one place or another. It was time to head back to Nuo-Di, which was fine with me. Being a target had been real exciting, but I was ready for something else. The trip back was uneventful, with the exception of a possible booby



Karen soldiers guard the Manerplaw meeting house, where Karen leadership is holding a major congressional conference.

trap. Not long after finding a trail that would take us up the mountain, the kid walking point suddenly shouted something. For a split second, I thought that this was it. Frantically trying to remember the Karen word for "ambush," I was about to jump into the jungle, but no one else was moving. Ler Pe Le gave a command, then cautiously approached the kid, who was pointing at something with his M16.

I walked over to take a look. On the side of the trail was a peculiar sight: Made of thin bamboo poles, someone had constructed a messy contraption which sort of resembled a toy table with no top. Hanging from it were a basket made with reeds, a necklace and a few pieces of colored string. Leaves had been placed in the basket, as well as roughly woven into pieces of the bamboo frame.

The thing seemed to be demanding investigation, saying, "Touch me, fool with me, figure out what the hell I am," which would have been the idea, of course, if it were a trap. It looked more like something a child might have built in his spare time, but there were no children here, and there was no spare time.

Whatever it was, we let it be and continued on up the mountain. Back at camp, following a little more rice and fish paste, I was told it would be best to return to Manerplaw. Nuo-Di was becoming increasingly "not steady," Ler Pe Le said, and because this afternoon had been quiet, some serious mayhem was expected tonight. Memories of how this morning had started out still exceedingly fresh in my head (and on my head), I didn't argue to stay.

It was still light when our truck roared into Manerplaw. The Toyota let me off at the training center, where I dropped off the UZI and began walking to the guesthouse. Back in civilization, of sorts, it was difficult not to think about the kids at Nuo-Di, wondering if they would be OK. With this still on my mind a couple of





moments later, I turned a corner and looked up to see two captured Burmese soldiers chopping wood under the eye of an AK-armed guard.

### Encounter With The Enemy

I had been told that neither the Burmese nor the Karens kept prisoners, so I didn't know why these two were still alive. I do know that if looks could kill, both Burmese prisoners and I would have dropped dead to the ground the second we made eye contact. Never in my life had I ever seen a deeper, more deathlike hate than in the eyes of those two men. I assume there were no rays of sunshine in my eyes, either.

When I arrived at the guesthouse, the other guests, a Canadian photographer and an Italian guy doing I'm-not-sure-what with a video camera, were waiting for a trip to the front.

Not lost on me was the thought that with a massive attack poised to turn this place into a graveyard any day now, after the Karens had invested tens of thousands of young lives to keep their fight for freedom alive, there would be a total of two and a half journalists here to cover what would probably be the end of that struggle, if the attack were to begin tonight.

I thought of what was most likely being dished out to the American public on the day's nightly news broadcasts back in the States: Dan Rather and the other idiots talking non-stop about how some fool in the Gaza Strip was told to leave his home; a group calling for socialized medical care while wondering why the economy was going to hell; a congressman's new bill to put pressure on Inner Snotslovia for not allowing a book to be published ...

Difficult to picture was: "This just in: Manerplaw, headquarters of the Karen, who have been fighting for freedom and self-determination for more than four decades against ruthless dictatorships in Rangoon, Burma, was just bombed out of existence. Manerplaw was also the base of more than 40 other diverse groups, all trying to make Burma a free, constitutional republic. Casualties are in the thousands; widespread use of torture against all ethnic Karen, including women and children, is expected to last indefinitely. Now to sports ..."

Sipping a cup of tea in the dark on the guesthouse porch, I knew that no one would ever hear that news broadcast. Readers of *SOF*, with few exceptions, were perhaps the only people in the United States who even knew what a Karen was.

I recalled a conversation with a professor of Asian Studies, who, after I had gone on for a while about the Karens, looked at me stupidly and said, "Well, this is the first I've heard of Koreans in Burma. What the hell are Koreans doing in Burma?" So it goes.

Early the next morning, interested in checking out a part of the front other than Nuo-Di, I found myself speeding up the Salween in a long-tail boat under a spectacular blue sky with the Canadian, the Italian, a guy named Nando, who was something of a *liaison extraordinaire*, and General Latu, who was the Karen *numero uno* military mind after General Bo Mya, the Karen president.



Author speeds along Salween River in long-tail boat to Mae Paa. A few days later, several camps and villages along the Salween were scenes of ferocious battles and destruction between KNLA troops and Burmese army.

### Close Your Eyes And Sail Away

General Latu, however, wasn't on his way to the front. Our boat pulled in at a small village, where the general's home was located. Everyone got out of the boat. "The military hospital is here," Nando said. "We should go see it." Christ, I thought, I wonder what the chances of seeing Ler Pe Le, Lein Zou or one of the other guys here was.

Strolling up a sunlit trail to the hospital, past little Karen homes filled with laughing Karen children, it soon seemed as though the war was something from a bad nightmare, something impossible in such a bright, gentle place. Karen village women dressed in colorful, traditional clothing blushed and giggled as they walked past, all the while carefully balancing loads carried atop their heads. Everyone was smiling at everyone else.

Five minutes later, all of that was gone as though it had never happened. Just after stepping into the hospital, which was already a scene of horror, a Karen soldier was brought in on a hammock strung from a bamboo pole, bleeding badly from at least three or four parts of his body. His eyes were out of focus and he was moaning that moan which usually means only one thing.

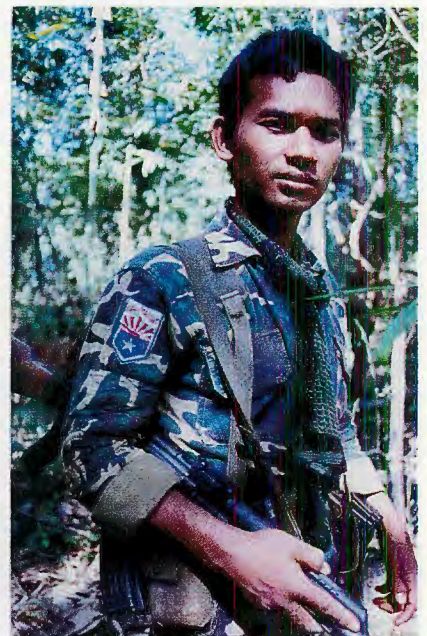
The hospital was filled with soldiers suffering from gunshot wounds, injuries from mortar and artillery explosions, and malaria. Worse, there were children — not as in the 15-year-old variety — but kids, 6 or 7 years old, some with no eyes, one with no leg — all next to their families, quietly moaning that same old moan. They didn't even have drugs to lessen the pain, let alone help make them better.

I looked at a pretty young Karen woman who no longer had a left arm, thanks to the Burmese government, which a few days before had asked the world community to "have more understanding" of its situation. It was time for me to get out of this place. I had seen enough, and there was only so much "understanding" I could take.

We walked back to the long-tail and continued our journey up the Salween. On our way, we stopped at Sob Moei, a restless looking place where the mortars had fallen when I was deliberating on whether or not to join Ler Pe Le's patrol. (Looking at a copy of the 11 Jan. 1992 *Bangkok Post* a few days later, a story reported that this place had been attacked by nearly 600 Burmese troops from the 83rd, 75th and 101st battalions. More than 80 Burmese were killed in the fighting,

*Continued on page 70*

Near Manerplaw, a young Karen finishes final training of his troops before preparing to move to the front.





## EVERY MAN A LIBERATION FRONT

**T**rying to understand what's happening politically in Burma is like asking Thai *tuk-tuk* drivers for directions: The more questions you ask, the more wildly conflicting answers you receive. After a while, you're in so deep that no one is sure where you're going anymore — including yourself.

One of the problems with understanding Burma (also called Myanmar) is that the Burmese government (the State Law and Order Restoration Council, SLORC), which is only a continuation of Ne Win's pre-1988 Burma Socialist Program Party (BSPP), has for more than 30 years followed a xenophobic policy of conducting its internal business without the attention of world media.

Virtually no foreign travelers to Burma have ever been allowed to go anywhere except the three tightly controlled towns of Rangoon, Mandalay and Pagan. This has allowed the rulers of the BSPP, then SLORC, to quietly go about destroying just about everyone and everything in the country they don't particularly like.

And there has been some serious destruction, as there is a lot that SLORC doesn't like — most notably the many ethnic armies fighting for self-determination and, more recently, anyone (especially students) with thoughts of replacing the old guard with a new, democratic government.

In 1988, one of the many things the Burmese government did not like included massive demonstrations for freedom, which exploded throughout Burma in the summer of that year. While most of the Burmese army was busy slaughtering the Karen and other ethnic groups on the borders, the remainder took aim at its own people. Many observers estimate that tens of thousands of Burmese were mowed down in 1988 alone.

The BSPP "ended" later in the year when, amid continuing demonstrations, a loyal Ne Win subordinate, General Saw Maung, staged a coup to replace Ne Win's civilian successor, Dr. Maung Maung, who had done little to keep the population off of the streets. The "new" government, SLORC, with Ne Win continuing to call the shots from behind the scenes, set out to "restore law and order throughout the land."

The National Unity Party (NUP), SLORC's entry in the 1990 general elections held in Burma, then lost badly to the National League for Democracy (NLD), a party headed by the 1991 Nobel Peace Prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi. There would have been no elections held at all, of course, if it were not for "Democracy Summer" in 1988, and unrest which continued through 1989.

Due to many insane but effective political maneuvers conducted since 1988 — such as the release of several thousand criminals onto the streets to raise hell with the populace — SLORC found it "simply could not release power to the NLD or anybody else, as law and order has broken down completely."

Naturally, there were promises of eventually handing over power to the NLD "after law and order had been restored." Unfortunately, since the elections, most leaders of the NLD have been shot, are "missing" or are in jail for various "crimes." Aung San Suu Kyi is still under house arrest in Rangoon.

Nothing at all has changed internally in Burma, and the war against the freedom-fighting ethnic groups on the borders continues unabated. However, since the ethnic groups are virtually the only ones in the country with weaponry to back their arguments, they remain the Burmese government's No. 1 concern.

There are more than 19 armed forces actively fighting against SLORC, with several other armies at least temporarily inactive. Some of these are the WNC, KSNLF, LNO, PSLP, NMDO, ABSDF, KNU, KIO and NNC. These groups, respectively, are the Wa National Council, Karenni State Nationalities Liberation Front, Lahu National Organization, Palaung State Liberation Party, National Mon Democracy Organization, All-Burma Students' Democratic Front, Karen National Union, Kachin Independence Organization and the Naga National Council.

The communist party of Burma (CPB), which controlled huge areas in the north-eastern part of the country, was as serious a threat as any of these groups, but in May 1989 lost 15,000 (almost all) of its troops, who defected to form armies with various ethnic groups, including the Kokang, Shan and Wa. Some of these new armies have ceased fighting with the Burmese, while others sided with the Burmese opposition and are still active.

With the CPB out of the picture, the KNU's Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) is the largest and most significant force facing the Burmese government today, able to field as many as 10,000 (poorly armed) troops when necessary. (Some of the other armies, such as the LNO, with fewer than 300 troops, are just another of the myriad headaches which keep SLORC leaders up at night.)

Organized during the late 1940s and early 1950s, around the time of Burmese independence (from Britain), the KNU in

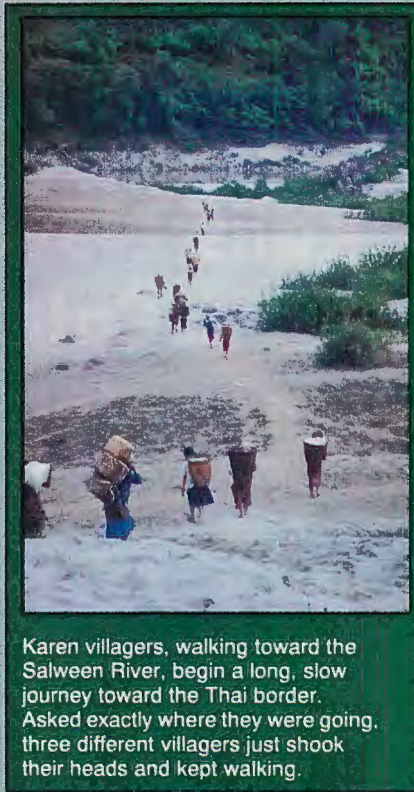
its various forms has always been a movement to secure, more than anything else, self-determination for the 7 million Karen people living in Burma.

Persecuted and mistreated by Burmese governments from the beginning, especially during the years immediately following World War II, the Karens felt that after all negotiations had failed, there was little else they could do but take up arms to fight for their beliefs.

More than 40 years later, the Karens fight for the same principles today that they did then, which most importantly include: the right to an autonomous state

where they can live freely and democratically without oppression. While these words are easy to speak, and are probably also claimed by half of all governments in the world, the Karens actually live (and die) by them every day.

In sharp contrast to the Orwellian hell of what's happening in Rangoon, Manerplaw, base of all Karen institutions, is a picture of smooth, democratically functioning government. A constitution guaranteeing individual rights is in place, officials are voted in and voted out of office, congresses are held — all in the middle of the jungle. Whether all of this can survive SLORC, however,



Karen villagers, walking toward the Salween River, begin a long, slow journey toward the Thai border. Asked exactly where they were going, three different villagers just shook their heads and kept walking.

is in doubt.

The current political situation in Burma is a race. No one believes that, with almost zero support among its population, SLORC or anything resembling it can last much longer. The Burmese cannot live in fear and poverty forever, and will not soon forget Aung San Suu Kyi and the events of 1988-90.

Racing against the time when a democratic government is in place in Rangoon, which would likely result in a negotiated settlement of the Burmese civil war, is the KNU. If the KNU were defeated, other opposition forces would likely be temporary.

With the Burmese army now at the gates of Manerplaw, chances are outstanding that the winner of this "race" will be decided this year.

— J.K.



# BLACK AVENGER

## Kokalis/Novak Custom Colt Commander

Text & Photos by Peter G. Kokalis



As it has the potential for making the biggest hole, the .45 ACP round is still our best choice when engaging human targets with a handgun. No better concealment envelope for this cartridge was ever devised than the Colt Light Weight Commander.

**A**nyone anticipating an imminent deadly confrontation would be well advised to arm himself with either a

fighting shotgun, submachine gun or battle rifle. Unfortunately, social taboos and mores proscribe the display of such apparatus in public places such as banks, post offices and shopping malls — the very places they might prove most useful these days. Had just one worthy been so armed in Luby's Cafeteria, it's doubtful that anyone other than cowboys would have ever heard of Killeen, Texas.

Although a distant last choice, most of us must be reconciled to packing a pistol most of the time. This said, it's limited potential for defense must be maximized to the fullest extent possible. For professional gun handlers this means a handgun that is as utterly reliable as it is possible to devise, regardless of expense, with acceptable combat accuracy and chambered for a cartridge of proven wound-ballistics potential. It goes without saying that another key factor in this equation is the operator's ability to transform extensive training into high-hit probability under stress.





For many of us this translates into a customized M1911A1-type semiautomatic pistol. As it has the potential for making the biggest hole, the .45 ACP round is still our best choice, especially so with the recent availability of Winchester's 230-grain Jacketed Hollow Point (JHP) load. Properly trained aficionados, when not inhibited by law-enforcement administrators, carry this single-action classic in "condition one" (a round in the chamber, a full magazine seated in place, the hammer fully cocked and the thumb safety engaged).

Handguns of this type are shot frequently in practice, carried constantly and seldom fired in anger. No better envelope has ever been devised for this set of parameters than Colt's Light Weight Commander. The concept dates back almost half a century.

The U.S. Army became interested in a lightweight pistol right after World War II, in 1946. A year later, the Army Ordnance Committee established a requirement for a semiautomatic pistol with a weight limit of 25 ounces and a maximum overall length of 7 inches. It's possible that Colt had already experimented with shortened slides prior to World War II.

Colt approached the Aluminum Com-

pany of America (ALCOA) in 1947, and by the following year sample forgings had been prepared. Several specimens were assembled, including some chambered for the 9mm Parabellum cartridge, as this was part of the Ordnance Committee's specifications. The slides were made of steel in the conventional manner, but the length was reduced from 7.38 inches to 6.63 inches. The barrel length was reduced from 5 inches down to 4.25 inches. A new barrel bushing, recoil spring plug, and guide rod were also designed.

#### First Light Weight Commander

**B**y 1949, further modifications had been made. To achieve greater weight reduction, the mainspring housing was made of aluminum. The grip safety was shortened, the lanyard loop on the bottom of the mainspring housing was omitted, a rounded hammer with a serrated edge and pierced head (reminiscent of the so-called "ring" hammer found on later Mauser "Broomhandle" pistols) was introduced, the extractor and firing pin were modified from the commercial-type, and the sights were altered to compensate for the reduced sight radius.

Early in 1950, Colt introduced this short, lightweight pistol in 9mm Parabel-

lum, .38 Super and .45 ACP as the "Commander Model." The serial numbers carry a "CLW" (Commander, Light Weight) prefix. Forty years later, this pistol is still available, chambered now for only the .45 ACP round, as a Series 80-type with a firing-pin safety. ALCOA still supplies the frame forgings, and the material used is an aluminum alloy, appropriately called "COLTALLOY."

The overall length of the Light Weight Commander is 7.75 inches. Width at the grip panels is 1.24 inches and the height is approximately 5.3 inches. The 4.25-inch barrel has six grooves with a left-hand twist of one turn in 16 inches. The weight, empty, is 27.5 ounces. An appealing package, but out of the box it just won't do.

Don't get me wrong. It will shoot straight and reliably, but devotees of the M1911A1 are never satisfied. For more than a half-century, pistolsmiths have been filing, stoning, polishing, grinding, soldering, welding, hammering and changing parts on the .45 auto pistol. Why? Is the design defective? Is it poorly executed in production series? Not at all. This constant tinkering is no more or less than an expression of devotion for what is arguably the best combat handgun that ever slapped leather.

Many still carry the M1911A1 into the deepest shadows of danger. Professionals whose lives may well depend on this tool of the trade will spare no expense to obtain the ultimate degree of reliability and performance. Is this obsession for perfection any different from that of the professional auto racer's?

Everyone who packs a .45 has his own ideas concerning the modifications required to bring John Browning's design up to his personal specifications and, most important, make him feel good. Feeling "good," i.e., confident, about the handgun you're toting is sometimes an important, albeit unquantifiable, ingredient in predicting success in a gunfight.

#### I Stick With Winners

After more than a quarter-century carrying the Browning-designed .45 in one variant or another, I too have some specific ideas about what should or should not be done to the M1911A1 series to make it street-ready. None of my .45s have muzzle weights or compensators. None have recoil springs designed for cream-puff loads. There are no ambidextrous, extended safety levers, as I have seen shooters' jackets rotate the right side lever of holstered .45s to the fire position. None of my sights have white dots or bars. The trigger guards are not squared-off and serrated.

When correctly adjusted to the ammunition employed, I prefer the





At the author's request, Milt Sparks Holsters Inc. altered their sophisticated new Executive Companion inside-the-waistband holster to a crossdraw design, which is both comfortable and provides maximum concealment. A valuable accessory for this holster is the new inside-the-waistband #1PS single magazine pouch.

robustness of a fixed rear sight. Enlarged magazine catch/release buttons will bump against the equipment or the body and dump the magazine at inappropriate times. Extended slide stop levers interfere with a proper Weaver hold, and thumb pressure is likely to inactivate the slide's hold-open after the last shot has been fired.

**B**eveling the magazine-well is pretty much standard procedure on a custom .45. It will marginally improve the time required for a speed reload. In the field, beveled cuts on the bottom of the magazine-well can attract debris. I usually choose to omit this modification, as I spend a considerable amount of time out in the bush. However, I recommend this option for those whose feet pound only pavement.

There are an infinite number of other doodads that serve no function but to provide unnecessary frosting. The M1911A1 series is no piece of cake. Important modifications are needed, however — most intended to enhance reliability and handling characteristics.

Unfortunately, custom pistolsmiths have largely focused on International Practical Shooting Conference (IPSC) competition, with little more than lip service paid to the needs of professional gun handlers. Those who have directed their efforts almost exclusively to fighting handguns are few and far between.

Among this small group, those who are truly competent are even smaller in number. Wayne Novak (Novak's .45 Shop, Dept. SOF, P.O. Box 4045, 1206 1/2 30th

St., Parkersburg, WV 26101; phone: 304-485-9295) is one of them.

Wayne began his career working for the famed Armand Swenson. After his return to the Ohio Valley region, Novak attended a short course taught by the highly respected former MTU armorer, CWO John M. Miller. While you will encounter Browning High Powers, Czech CZ-75s, plus SIG-Sauer, H&K, Glock and S&W pistols in various stages of modification on Novak's workbench at any given time, the bulk of his work is devoted to Colt Government Models and Light Weight Commanders.

### Modifying The Commander

About a year ago, I obtained an early Colt Series 70 LW Commander in fine condition. It was the ideal starting envelope for a custom carry gun. Together, Wayne and I decided upon a number of alterations intended to enhance practical performance. The result is "Black Avenger," the "Kokalis/Novak Fighting Commander."

The modifications were extensive (and expensive) and all street-proven options. Let's start at the top of the slide, and more or less work downward.

Novak's LoMount Carry rear sight — without doubt the finest combat-type rear sight ever attached to a handgun — was installed (\$57.95) with a Trijicon Self Luminous Dot on each side of its 0.125-inch open square-notch. Rounded and radiused in all the right places, Wayne's LoMount Carry rear sight will not impede the important "tap, rack, bang" drill. It can be drifted in its dovetail on the slide to adjust windage zero.

Colt M1911A1 front sight blades are too small and, worse yet, have a disastrous tendency to fly off into the sunset at inappropriate times. A dovetail was milled into the slide and a high-profile, blade-type front side was installed (\$50). It can also be drifted in its dovetail to adjust windage zero, but more important, it is secure and will never part company from the slide. Of the same thickness as the rear sight's open square-notch, the front sight has a single Trijicon Self-Luminous Dot.

Most of my carry pistols (and all of my MP5 SMGs) are equipped with self-luminous sights. Tritium (an isotope of hydrogen) provides the energy source for self-luminous sights of this type. Tritium gas and a phosphor particle are pressurized within a tiny glass capsule. Tritium creates soft beta rays which are converted to visible light when they strike the phosphor particle. The capsules are resistant to oil, water, corrosion and temperature changes.

While white dots or outlines are never noticed under stress by those of us trained by Jeff Cooper to concentrate solely on "Front sight — Press," self-luminous tritium sights are useful adjuncts to firing

at night or under subdued-light conditions. Three-dot Trijicon tritium inserts cost \$135, installed.

As a previous owner with more guts than skill had attempted to "throat" (polish around the chamber mouth) the barrel of my LW Commander with a Dremel tool and had botched the job badly, Novak installed a stainless steel, match-grade BarSto barrel, to which was fitted a King's National Match bushing, machined out of solid 416 stainless-steel stock (\$245 for both).

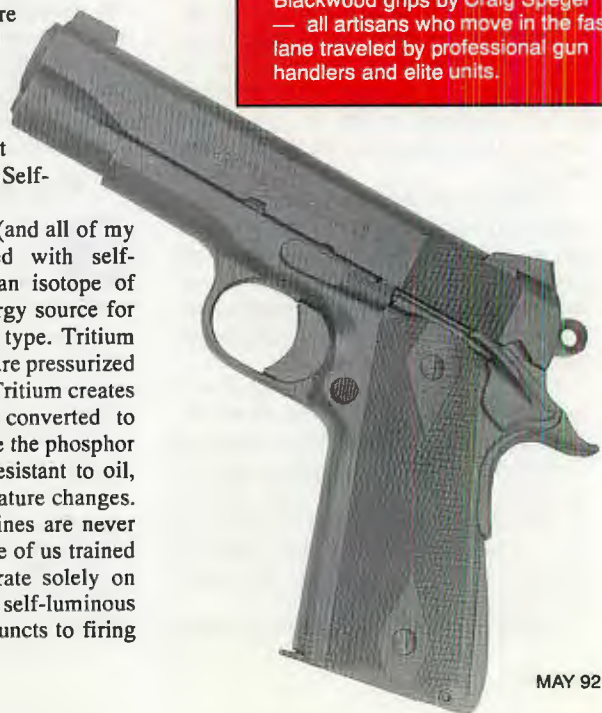
### Novak's Novel Enhancement

**A**s part of his "reliability" package, Wayne throated this barrel correctly, checked the chamber specifications with a .45 ACP chamber reamer, polished the barrel's and frame's feed ramps, and "crowned" the barrel's muzzle. Crowning, which is done with a special reamer, is a beveling process that protects the critical part of a barrel's rifling from damage. In addition, if the muzzle is not squared, propellant gases will escape prematurely, tipping the bullet's base as it leaves the muzzle and degrading the accuracy potential.

The reliability package also includes adjusting, and if required, reshaping the extractor; inspecting and refining (removing sharp edges and polishing) the breech face; adjusting the magazine catch/release; and proving (by firing at the range) all magazines shipped with the pistol. Total cost of the reliability package is \$50.

I also requested Wayne's famous "carry bevel" package (\$55), in which all sharp edges on the slide and frame are rounded

"Black Avenger," the "Kokalis/Novak Fighting Commander," features custom modifications by Wayne Novak emphasizing reliability and high-hit probability, complemented by W.E. Birdsong's tough Black T Treatment and handcrafted African Blackwood grips by Craig Spiegel — all artisans who move in the fast lane traveled by professional gun handlers and elite units.





off. At this time, Novak also put a light scallop on the rear lip of the ejection port to avoid dents on the empty cases (important for those of us who reload). In addition, almost everyone can benefit from an extended (left side only) thumb safety on the M1911A1, and one was installed for \$45.

If you fire from the Weaver position, hammer bite will cut the web of your firing hand, between the thumb and the trigger finger, after just several magazines have been fired. This can be eliminated by installation of the so-called "beavertail"-type grip safety (\$70) — a mandated



This finish coats the firearms and ancillary equipment of numerous, albeit unnamed, federal agencies and certain unspecified military units.

All metal (steel and aluminum) parts of the firearm are treated. After vapor-degreasing, they are low-pressure blasted with very fine, 150-grit aluminum oxide. Then the parts are both phosphate- and

Kokalis/Novak Fighting Commander, fieldstripped — note that Birdsong's Black T Treatment has been applied to all metal components, including the recoil spring.

chromate-finished. Black T is then applied by hand and heat-cured. The complete finish is no more than 2 to 3 ten-thousandths (0.0002 - 0.0003) of an inch in thickness. This compares favorably to salt bluing (black or blue oxide) which is usually about 4 ten-thousandths (0.0004-inch) of an inch thick. The final result has a high salt spray and humidity resistance (greater than 500

option for those who practice frequently.

No combat M1911A1-type .45 would be complete without a trigger job. Wayne recommends no lighter than 4- to 4.5-pound trigger pull weights, and mine measures a crisp, consistent 4.25 pounds. It may seem contradictory, but the more you shoot, the more trigger-sensitive you become.

After all this hammering and sawing, my LW Commander needed to be re-finished. Nickel-plated .45s are for fighter pilots (who are also usually encountered wearing cowboy boots, sheepskin-lined leather jackets, "mirror"-type sunglasses, silk scarves, shoulder holsters and carrying extended pistol magazines that stick a foot below the magazine well — all accompanied with incredible lies about their sexual exploits). Seriously dangerous people prefer black.

### Basic Black Protection

As a consequence, Wayne sent my pistol to W.E. Birdsong & Associates (Dept. SOF, P.O. Box 9549, Jackson, MS 39286) for the "Black T Treatment" (\$125). Black T is a resin-bonded lubricant coating, and a co-dispersion of fluoropolymer resin, Teflon and graphite, in a thermosetting binder. It produces a low-friction coating, free of so-called "stick-slip" (smear) characteristics, combined with excellent resistance to corrosion. Available colors are non-reflective black and NATO (olive) green.

hours), a very low coefficient of friction (0.08) and a service temperature-high of 300 degrees Fahrenheit continuous (325 F for intermittent service).

**T**his is an extremely low-maintenance finish — very little, if any, lubrication is required. In most cases, a lightly oiled rag is sufficient to wipe away accumulated debris and carbon fouling. I know, someone told you that about your M16 rifle, 25 years ago in Vietnam, and look what happened. That was then, this is now; protective coatings have come a long way in the past quarter-century. Believe me, Birdsong's Black T is a superb finish for combat weapons.

A fitting complement to the Black T finish was the installation of a set of African Blackwood grip panels (\$65) handcrafted by Craig Spegel (Dept. SOF, P.O. Box 108, Bay City, OR 97107; phone: 503-377-2697). All of Spegel's grips are hand checkered. I chose his M1911 diamond pattern, but they are also available smooth. I have a Novak-customized Browning High Power that sports a set of fully checkered Spegel grips. If specified, the right grip panel can be cut for an ambidextrous thumb-safety lever. Other exotic woods are available and include Cocobolo, Kingwood, Tulipwood, Madagascar Rosewood and Bocote. Spegel is well known among professional *pistoleros*, and his work is highly regarded.

This pistol was begging for a conceal-

ment holster rig to match the master touches of Novak, Birdsong and Spegel. Tony Kanaley of Milt Sparks Holsters Inc. (Dept. SOF, 605 E. 44th, No. 2, Boise, ID 83714; phone: 208-377-5577 — catalog \$2.50) was up to the challenge.

### Personalized Holster Rig

Tony recently introduced an inside-the-waistband holster called the #EX Executives Companion, which has several features setting it apart from their famous Summer Special. The metal-lined top band is positioned directly underneath the gun belt, assuring that the holster will not collapse at this point. This allows the pistol to sit deeper in the pants for added concealment and security, while still permitting a full firing grip. The holster is smooth-side-out and molded to the gun it is meant to carry — both to reduce bulk, add to retention and improve appearance.

All Milt Sparks holsters are made of top-quality cowhide, and their finish helps repel perspiration. One of the most important features of the Executive Companion is the interchangeable belt-loop system, which permits the holster to be fitted to belts varying in width from 1-inch to 1.75 inches. Finally, it is fabricated of somewhat lighter leather than the Summer Special (5.5-ounce leather instead of 6.5-ounce, which translates into about a 0.25mm difference in thickness).

Great, but this holster has a rearward rake (angled to point the muzzle of the handgun to the rear — also called the FBI rake), and thus can only be worn strong side. I prefer crossdraw exclusively for belt holsters. A crossdraw position permits the support hand to sweep aside the concealing jacket or coat without fumbling and, equally important, the shooter does not telegraph his draw stroke to potential threats on the flanks or to the rear.

At my request, Tony removed the rearward rake and provided a straight up-and-down cant. He then took the pattern and reversed it, with the metal reinforcement moved to the rear — in back of the trigger guard. The result is the most comfortable inside-the-waistband holster I have ever carried, while also providing maximum concealment.

Most crossdraw rigs are more difficult to conceal than a strong side holster, as the pistol's butt faces forward, and a forward rake will cause the weapon to fall slightly away from the body. Kanaley's re-design of the Executive Companion to my specifications minimized this latter tendency to the fullest extent possible. The price is \$62 and the only options are colors, which include natural, black or cordovan. Extra belt loops for the Executive Companion Crossdraw holster are \$4 each. A valuable accessory for this rig is the new inside-the-waistband #1PS single magazine pouch (\$22), which features a rear flap to protect the body

*Continued on page 69*



# CRIMESTRIKE

## Control Guns or Control Criminals — Your Choice

by James Jay Baker

**A**FTER 11 felony convictions, nine prison terms and 15 months into a 15-year sentence for sexually assaulting a child, Carl Wayne Buntion was paroled from a Texas prison. On parole for the sixth time, he knew the rules but didn't bother to check in with parole authorities. By the time he was six weeks overdue, no one had even started looking for him.

Then Jim Irby, a Houston police officer, made a routine traffic stop. The driver, Buntion, pulled a gun and shot him. Citizens rushed to Irby's aid. One held Buntion at bay with Irby's gun; another called for help on his radio. Police apprehended the killer, but it was too late for Jim Irby. He was dead.

Jim's widow established the Irby Foundation to "shine a light" on the bankrupt criminal justice system in Houston, throughout Texas, and across the nation. Last fall, one year after her husband's death, Maura Irby's challenge seemed insurmountable. In the Houston area (Harris County) alone, 5,550 criminals on



Spearheading CrimeStrike is James Baker, a former prosecutor from Missouri and Executive Director of the NRA's Institute for Legislative Action.

parole or probation were overdue in reporting to their case officer or halfway houses.

People like Maura, however strong and unwavering, until recently found themselves fighting alone. But now a new voice has been added to theirs — that of the National Rifle Association (NRA).

For decades a vocal advocate of genuine crime control — from mandatory sentencing to prison building — the NRA has chosen to take aim at the armed criminal, through a weapon called CrimeStrike.

As a new division and program within the NRA, CrimeStrike hopes to bring all of the organization's vast resources, grassroots support and membership to bear against the single worst threat to life on our city streets — the armed, violent criminal. By identifying, publicizing and helping correct weaknesses in the current criminal justice system, CrimeStrike believes it can stop this threat to our lives and liberty.

### Crime Pays

Every year, one in four households falls victim to a serious crime. A burglary is committed every 10 seconds, a rape every six minutes and a murder every 25 minutes. Why? Because crime pays.

This hasn't always been the case. In the 1950s, the likelihood of punishment was high and crime was low. Since the '50s, however, the probability of crimes being cleared by arrest has declined drastically, even for serious offenses. Violent offenders don't need a computer to determine that robbery, assault, rape or even murder carry little risk of punishment.

Thugs know law-enforcement resources are stretched to the limit. When apprehended, criminals know serious charges may be plea-bargained away. When sentenced, they know some judges are "easy." When imprisoned, they know they'll serve a fraction of their sentence. When confined, they know they're headed for parole. And once they're back on the street, they know their numbers have

overloaded the system, so there will be little, if any, response when they don't check in with the halfway house.

In some places, actual time served has plummeted to an unbelievable 15% of sentence. Criminals — especially repeat-offenders (responsible for the majority of violent crimes) — have a basic, gut-level street knowledge that crime carries little risk.

Professor Morgan O. Reynolds of Texas A&M University, who studies criminal justice for the National Center for Policy Analysis, finds that "the probability of being arrested after committing a murder has fallen 25%, and the percentage of crimes resulting in a prison sentence has declined by at least 60% for every major category of crime," since the 1950s.

Overall, fewer than two of every 100 serious crimes result in a prison term. Adjust average prison terms for the likelihood of arrest, prosecution and imprisonment, and the commission of a serious crime in the United States will cost a criminal 8.5 days on average in prison.

### Opposition To More Prisons

Citizens seeking criminal justice reform are faced with fierce opposition by politicians and "experts" who point with shame at the overall U.S. incarceration rate. They criticize minimum mandatory sentences for gun misuse in crimes, but show no concern about the early release of dangerous offenders.

An American Civil Liberties Union representative once wrote that "no jurisdiction has ever ... had an impact on crime rates by an expanded incarceration policy." This is false, of course, but it has been repeated so often that it is often blindly accepted as gospel.

The *Washington Post*, a vicious (if unregistered) lobbyist on gun control issues, commented that "there are long-range solutions offered to reduce crime



and the prison population. Gun control, for example, is among them, as are better social services and job training. Harsh mandatory minimum sentences could be abolished."

Gun control advocate Franklin E. Zimring, a Berkeley law professor who studied restrictive gun control last year in *Scientific American*, decried "the failure of prisons to control crime" in a *Washington Post* editorial. He wrote that the failure of prisons to halt crime "contributes to the demand for still more prisons ... reversing this process is one important step toward rational prison policy." He criticized Texas — not for a lack of correctional facilities, but for having so many it that the state numbers "among the seven largest penal systems" in the world.

But the anti-crime-fighting lobby is wrong. Texas skimmed on prison spending, and it drove Texas crime rates through the roof. Plagued by a growing inmate population, the Texas correctional system buckled under the sheer weight of external challenges — from worsening guard-inmate ratios to federally mandated "improvements" like better health care and college courses for inmates.

Faced with a quadrupling of costs per prisoner in the 1980s, the Texas legislature opened the relief valve, and prisoners were jettisoned. This valve is still open, and the "best" of the "worst" are still streaming out of prison — dangerous offenders like the criminal who murdered Officer Irby.

Critics of prison building must be taken to task in this debate on crime control. Yes, the Texas prison population more than doubled in the 1980s. But the average term served dropped from 55% of sentence to less than 15%. Yes, costs per prisoner rose (thanks in part to college tuition for inmates), but the number of convicts on parole increased 21 times over.

### Criminals And Gun Control

Armed criminals not only threaten life; they threaten our liberty. The violent offender plays a starring role in the theater of gun control politics. The latest criminal misuse of a firearm becomes the first paragraph in congressional testimony delivered by Handgun Control Inc. And it never really matters whether there is a direct tie between the gun control proposal of the day and the crime discussed in yesterday's news. If it makes good copy it's never questioned.

The criminal's misuse of firearms is the fuel propelling demands for waiting periods, bans, registration and other prohibitions — even in the most gun-restrictive jurisdictions like Washington, D.C. Consider these facts about our nation's murder capital:

- In 1977, there was a total handgun freeze, with stringent restrictions on the purchase, ownership and storage of long guns. Since 1977, no one has been able to legally purchase a handgun — No one.



When imprisoned, criminals know they'll serve a fraction of their sentence. When they're back on the street there will be little, if any, response when they don't check in with their parole officer or halfway house.

- Nowhere in the United States can any D.C. resident lawfully purchase a handgun — Nowhere.

- Armed assaults and homicides are increasingly committed by youthful offenders armed with handguns. Yet, nowhere in the United States can any teenager lawfully purchase a handgun from a federally licensed firearms dealer — Nowhere.

### Breaking Through Criminal Fortifications

In engaging the violent criminal, Americans are fighting a target that is increasingly difficult to get to. The criminal is barricaded against the direct fire of crime deterrence by the very system we count on to deter crime.

From inadequately staffed or poorly equipped police forces to plea bargaining; from "politicized" prosecutorial priorities to poor sentencing guidelines; from lenient judges to politicians who have stalled prison building initiatives — it is our criminal justice system that keeps society from defeating the criminal.

Sadly, we Americans have let our system make it so. But the system is actually policymakers and implementers; the system is people with names. And we Americans must begin taking names.

The mission of CrimeStrike is to help turn this abysmal situation around, through

the traditional, forceful power of people getting involved to make a change. At present this consists of a sharply focused legislative effort underway to toughen anti-crime measures at federal and state levels. It also has a plan for expansion to involve volunteerism.

CrimeStrike hopes to provide a unified voice for victims, citizens and law enforcement alike in the following ways: by lobbying for criminal justice reform as a primary legislative objective; by calling for adequate prison space to keep violent offenders behind bars; by helping crime victims fight back for stiffer penalties; and, as soon as possible, by putting a volunteer infrastructure in place to assist victims in appearances before parole hearings or similar boards when their attackers are considered for release.

CrimeStrike will seek to engage authorities involved in bail reform, and recommend changes to sentencing guidelines and parole policies. In the future it will include a cadre of volunteers who will monitor a judicial circuit to identify ineffective prosecutors, lenient judges, inadequate prison capacity and inappropriate plea bargaining.

CrimeStrike will also work to unseat politicians who oppose genuine crime-fighting initiatives, such as minimum mandatory sentencing for criminal misuse of a gun.

CrimeStrike will share with the public the names of politicians who oppose prison building and other crime-fighting initiatives.

Last fall, Texas voters overwhelmingly passed a bond issue for prison construction. They know the cost of building prisons may be high, but they also know the costs of doing nothing are much higher. According to Professor Reynolds, "the typical offender let loose in society will engage in a one-man crime wave, creating damage to society more than 17 times as costly as imprisonment."

But the costs are higher still. Ask the city of Houston, which lost a public servant in Jim Irby. Ask Maura Irby and her children, who lost a loving husband and father.

NRA's CrimeStrike will give people like Maura the means of fighting back — of breaking through the barricades our criminal justice system has erected around armed, violent criminals — and will help build a new system to make crime *not* pay anymore.

This year can mark a turning point in the nation's criminal justice system. If you agree, join us by calling 1-800-538-4NRA to become a member of the NRA. If you want to be considered as a potential volunteer, tell the operator when you call.

*A lifelong hunter, competitive shooter and former prosecutor in Missouri, James Jay Baker is Executive Director of the NRA's Institute for Legislative Action.*



# SOF'S 1992 AFRICAN SAFARI

If you have always wanted to hunt Africa — 1992 is your year. Join *Soldier of Fortune* magazine's Editor and Publisher Robert K. Brown and SOF's Outdoor Editor Galen L. Geer on a six-day South African Safari hunting the plains game of famed Casketts Ranch. This SOF Safari is limited to six hunters only and open on a first come, first served basis.

## BOW AND RIFLE

The thrill of the African hunt is enhanced by the challenge of bow hunting African game. Although both Brown and Geer will be bow hunting their African game, the SOF Safari is not limited to bow hunters. Both rifle and handgun hunting are also available. The SOF Safari is booked through Roc Safaris, one of South Africa's premier Safari and ranching operations, and its staff is experienced in handling the needs of archery,

handgun and rifle hunters to insure a successful Safari. For more adventurous hunters, special Safaris to Zambia to stalk buffalo with a bow are available.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

Individual hunters on the SOF Safari can increase the number of days they hunt beyond the 6-day SOF package. Also, additional hunts for buffalo and lion can be arranged. For information and complete prices

on SOF and Roc Safaris write: SOF Safari, P.O. Box 693, Boulder, CO 80306

## 1992 SAFARI PRICES

Daily Hunting Fee ... \$390 per hunter. Includes: lodging, meals, drinks, transportation to and from lodge and hunting areas, also guide fees. Airport transportation days are the arrival and departure days and not counted as hunting days. Transportation to and from Africa and individual animal trophy fees are not included. Six-day Safari fee total is \$2,540.00 per hunter. Write SOF at the above address for trophy fees and additional information.





THE 1992  
ELECTION IS  
OPEN SEASON  
ON ANTI-GUN  
POLITICIANS.

**AND THIS  
IS YOUR  
FIRE POWER.**





# USE YOUR FIRE POWER.

## **"HERE'S HOW TO USE**

**D**id you know over 2,000 anti-gun bills are proposed each year by anti-gun politicians?

Did you know *98% of them will be re-elected* unless you and every gun owner unite against them?





# YOUR POWER TO FIRE ANTI-GUN POLITICIANS IN 1992."

And if you think your vote doesn't count, consider this: Only 25% of eligible voters control who wins.

Because of redistricting and retirements, 1992 is an historic election year. As many as 125 congressional seats are prime targets, plus hundreds of state and local seats.

If pro-gun candidates don't grab them, anti-gun candidates will. And you'll have to put up with more career politicians whose gun-ban schemes will last well into the next century. *That's why your vote this year may save you dozens of votes for years to come.*



*James Jay Baker is executive director of the National Rifle Association's Institute for Legislative Action.*

Please. Join the NRA.  
Get registered to vote.  
Get informed to vote.  
Then vote.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James Jay Baker".

*James Jay Baker*



## **AN EXAMPLE: VOTERS REVOLT IN NEW JERSEY.**

*In November 1991, outraged New Jersey gun owners fired 10 state senators and 20 assemblymen who voted for the 1990 ban on semiautomatic firearms – including the law's sponsor. Voted into office were 17 pro-gun senators and 34 assemblymen, including many new legislative faces ... now poised to make important changes in a crime-ridden state where gun owners were once routinely victimized.*

*It happened in New Jersey. Your '92 vote can make it happen nationwide.*

## **WHAT TO DO NOW!**

**CALL 1-800-821-4NRA NOW. HERE'S WHAT YOU'LL GET →**



# CALL 1-800-821-4NRA NOW...

## 1. TO GET REGISTERED TO VOTE.

Call now if you want us to send you information on how, when and where to register to vote.

## 2. TO GET INFORMED TO VOTE.

Call now so that as the '92 elections draw closer we can mail you the Political Gun Rights voter's brochure on candidates running for President, U.S. Senate, U.S. House of Representatives and State Legislatures.

## 3. TO JOIN THE NATIONAL RIFLE ASSOCIATION.

If you want to be represented in your State Capitol and in the U.S. Congress, you should join millions of Americans as NRA members who want their freedoms protected.

Your \$25 NRA Annual Membership includes:

- ✗ NRA shooter's cap and decal
- ✗ No annual fee, 15.9% APR VISA card (for qualified applicants)\*
- ✗ 12 issues of your choice of *The American Hunter* or *The American Rifleman* magazines
- ✗ Special members-only insurance benefits
- ✗ And much more.

You can charge your membership to your VISA or MasterCard, or we can bill you later. Don't wait. Call now!

# USE YOUR FIRE POWER OR LOSE YOUR FIREARMS.

\* The transaction fee for cash advances is \$3.00; the annual percentage rate for all cash advances except balance-transfer checks is 18%. The annual percentage rate for balance-transfer checks is 13.9%.



# "TERRORISTS"

## Respond

Robert Brown  
Editor *Soldier of Fortune*

We're delighted to see that *Soldier of Fortune* and the National Rifle Association are so terrified of the animal rights movement, but we're afraid the reasons for your terror are all the wrong ones. You see, it was someone from the anti-animal-rights side who shot Ohio anti-fur protester Randy Shields from a passing vehicle at a demonstration on 3 February 1990, who firebombed a private animal shelter in Little Ferry, New Jersey, on 9 November 1991, who assassinated animal rights activist Jesse Halmes in New York on 23 August 1990, who killed and dismembered James Madden of Citizens for a Better Environment near Racine, Wisconsin in late June 1990, who killed and skinned Texas activist Karen Wakeland's kittens in her own living room, also in June 1990, and fired shots at Wakeland and her daughters. Further, the "evidence" the NRA cites regarding the sabotage at the Wing and Shot Hunting Club points not toward animal rights activists, but rather toward a trapper trying to keep hunters away from his line.

Why? Because, first of all, no animal rights group in the United States either advocates or condones any protest activity that might injure either animals or people. One activist group Geer mentioned has given the names of purported activists who threatened acts of violence to the FBI, believing that the alleged activists were in fact agents provocateurs hired by our opposition.

Second, no animal rights group ever claimed credit for the action. The Animal Liberation Front and similar groups claim credit for their activities and provide photographs and videotapes, since their primary objectives are exposing animal abuse and gaining publicity for the cause. Third, I encountered similar booby traps during the dozen winters I spent as a volunteer assistant deputy game warden.

Geer neglected to mention that the mental patient who placed a bomb in the U.S. Surgical Corp. parking lot was recruited by two paid operatives for U.S. Surgical, Marylou Sapone and Marc Mead, who encouraged her, gave her the money to buy the bomb, and drove her to the site. Sapone spent over a year combing the animal rights movement in search of someone stupid enough to fall for such a scheme before hitting upon the mental patient, who was not a member of any animal rights organization. I should know; as I have testified under oath and with witnesses, Sapone approached me with the bombing scheme on 17 January 1988. I thought she was a drunken babbling idiot, and told her it was an idiotic idea.

You may have cause to be afraid of our ideas, but no cause to be afraid of us. With all due respect, there are probably many more terrorists who read *Soldier of Fortune*, for whatever reason, than have any involvement with animal rights.

Merritt Clifton  
News Editor, *The Animals' Agenda*  
Monroe, Connecticut

### Author Galen Geer replies:

Item 1: *Ohio fur protester shot*. According to the 5 February 1990 *Columbus Dispatch*, Randy Shields was shot in the shoulder with a pellet from an air rifle while protesting a seminar on chinchilla raising. Shields told the paper two male teenagers were sitting on furniture in the back of a pickup truck; when the truck passed the protesters, Shields felt "this thud." Shields didn't see the shooter but someone else told him, "you've been shot. They have a black air gun."

An air gun hardly constitutes the drive-by shooting implied by Clifton. Also, if they could tell it was a black gun, then why no license number for the police? Did the teens confess to being

anti-animal-rights activists?

Item 2: *Firebombing in Little Ferry, New Jersey*. There was a firebombing and we hope the bombers are caught and put in jail. However, according to the *Newark Star-Ledger*, Bergen County Prosecutor John J. Fahy said there were three other intentionally set blazes in the borough that weekend. It appears Iris Lance, who lost her house in the fire, was targeted because she was living with

Continued on page 73







# SALVO GRENADE

Continued from page 31

type. Reliable technical intelligence sources have reported that, during the 1960s, North Korea introduced a hand grenade with steel balls embedded in plastic, aluminum and sintered steel matrices.

Several years ago I examined and fired a North Korean AK-47 in El Salvador that was equipped with a rigid wooden buttstock and modified for grenade launching by attachment of a launcher on the muzzle. It was similar in appearance to the LON-1 launcher system found on the Polish PMK-DGN-60 rifle. It had a grenade-launching sight on the right side of the receiver below the rear sight, and a modified gas cylinder with a cutoff valve. I have also encountered very small lots of ballistite (blank) ammunition, with crimped case mouths and black mouth sealant of North Korean manufacture, designed for launching rifle grenades from this weapon.

It does not stretch the imagination too much to conclude this grenade probably is of North Korean origin. The UZRGM fuze assembly might have been supplied to North Korea by Bulgaria, or it might have been added to the grenade in El Salvador by either FMLN terrorists or the *Policia Nacional* bomb squad personnel who turned them over to us.

Hand grenades should be handled with extreme care. They are potentially the most dangerous item in the soldier's arsenal of personal weaponry. Throughout history, they have produced more self-inflicted injuries than any other device available to the infantry. Yet they still remain an important ingredient in the grunt's ability to meet with, and destroy, the enemy. While they'll never replace a rifle, I'll take a sack of grenades over a pistol anytime. ☒

# COLT COMMANDER

Continued from page 63

from the front edge of the magazine's floorplate.

At the present time, the ammunition of choice in caliber .45 ACP is Winchester's 230-grain Jacketed Hollow Point (JHP) load — product number Q4243. The velocity of this ammunition averages about 820 feet per second (fps) from the Commander's 4.25-inch barrel. The depth of penetration in soft tissue is about 15.5 inches, with consistent, concentric expansion of the bullet to approximately .65 caliber.

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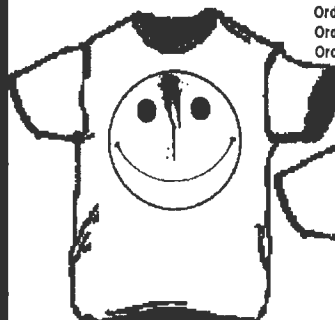
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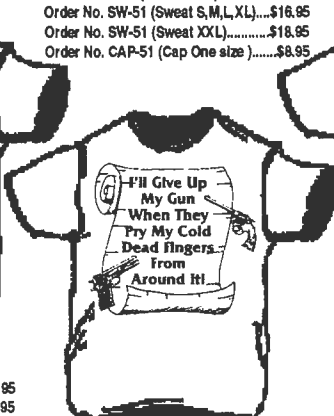
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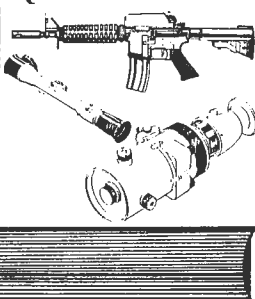
Continued from page 63

from the front edge of the magazine's floorplate.

At the present time, the ammunition of choice in caliber .45 ACP is Winchester's 230-grain Jacketed Hollow Point (JHP) load — product number Q4243. The velocity of this ammunition averages about 820 feet per second (fps) from the Commander's 4.25-inch barrel. The depth of penetration in soft tissue is about 15.5 inches, with consistent, concentric expansion of the bullet to approximately .65 caliber.

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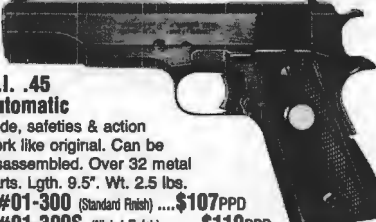
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## LAST STAND

Continued from page 58

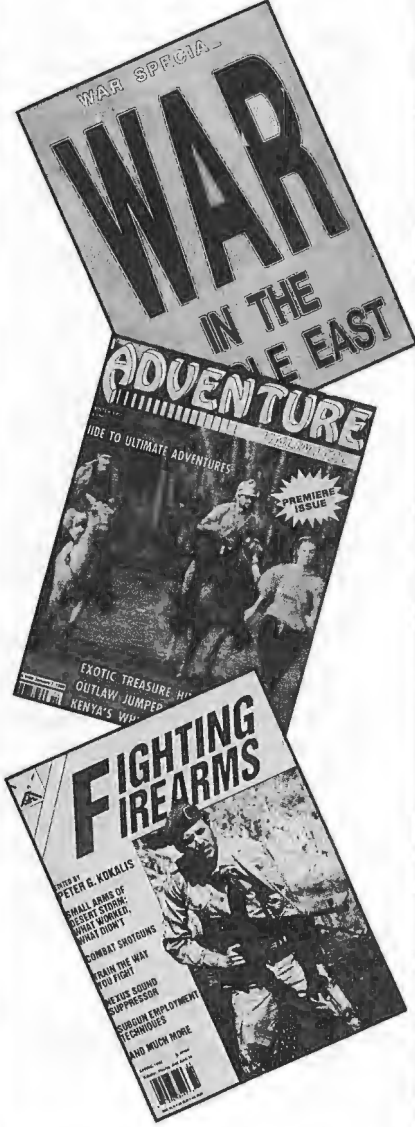
with several-dozen wounded; the Karens suffered seven dead and 12 wounded.)

Twenty minutes after leaving Sob Moei, that jumping-off feeling began seeping back into the air. To our right was what used to be the village of Mae Lac-Ta. Evacuated a week earlier, it was now a scene of nothingness. All that could be seen around the empty huts were bamboo doors swinging in the breeze, a few stray animals, an occasional Karen soldier and maybe a ghost or two.

### Refugees Out - Soldiers In

Soon after our boat pulled in at a place called Mae Paa, which was being used as a

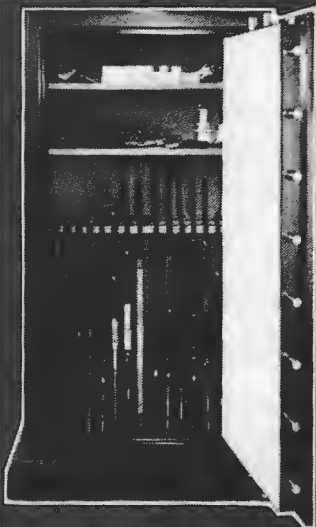
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staging area to the front by the Karens, I was well aware that I was back in no-man's-land. The two other foreigners, Nando and I approached the Karen camp, where every expression on every Karen fighter's face was: What in the hell are you doing here? Nando calmed them down, however, after which we were free to look around.

Mae Paa was seeing a lot of activity these days. All around, soldiers from nearby mountain camps were coming down to replenish supplies, loading up baskets full of scarce RPG rounds, mortars, and .50-caliber and other ammunition to take back to their camps. Then, just as I was checking out a mortar, the invasion began.

Fortunately for my peace of mind, not to mention my life, the invaders were not Burmese. Close to 100 Karen villagers, mostly older men, women and children carrying everything they owned on their backs came pouring down the hill into Mae Paa. No doubt having heard of what the Burmese do to Karen villages and the people who live in them, these people, like those of Mae Lac-Ta a week earlier, had finally decided to just get the hell out of town.

Suddenly, Mae Paa was getting a bit chaotic. With these people on their way to God-knows-where — children screaming and many people crying — soldiers from a Karen reinforcement battalion began unloading from the Salween. Three boatloads of maybe 60 troops, including several female soldiers, got out of their boats armed to the eyeballs with assorted weaponry on their way to a camp near Twee Par Wi Kyo.

It's difficult to know what to say to a smiling young freedom fighter going off to fight in a place where he is outgunned and outnumbered by the enemy 10-to-1. Sitting on the riverbank watching these Karen soldiers walk past, several sort of stopped to say hello. I was hoping that some great words would come to me, something to kind of send them off with.

But there were no words. A lot of these kids would be dead soon, possibly tonight, and there wasn't a damned thing I could say that would change that.

*John Kreiger, former Executive Editor of SOF, is a journalist currently fooling around in his home away from home, a ghetto in central Jakarta.*

Editor's Note: As we go to press, the Burmese army is within 8 — 10km of Manerplaw. They have cut several vital supply routes and established an artillery firebase on a hill within range of the town. According to a Thai border police source quoted in the Bangkok Post, "the Rangoon troopers stand a good chance of taking Manerplaw within this dry season." ❌

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## CROATIA

Continued from page 41

"bunker" — actually the cellar of a large house. We were ushered into the kitchen where a woman soldier, looking totally incongruous in camouflage uniform and a red fez, served us an appetizing meal. Afterward, we were granted an interview with the area commander, a small but hard looking man.

"In every village, town and city, the first units that attack are those of HOS," the commander told us as our guide translated.

"When the Cetniks [Serbian irregulars, pronounced "Chetniks."] attack, and the fire is too strong for us, we are the last to leave ..."

I asked why this was.

"Because we have heart," he replied. "In Croatia, we say we have moods — balls."

According to the commander, HOS had between 30,000 and 40,000 fighters dispersed throughout Croatia. Apparently, there was no shortage of volunteers.

We had been advised by some Internationals to avoid HOS, as their presence in an area invariably attracted enemy fire. This became evident the next morning. As we struggled to change a wheel on our van parked opposite HOS headquarters, the four of us were narrowly missed by sniper fire. The soldiers merely shrugged off the incident.

Later, near a village defended by HOS, Jim and I were taken on a patrol, through minefields, to within 200 meters of the Cetnik positions. Another harrowing experience. I'm not sure who was more relieved when it was over — ourselves or Ronnie and Alan, who had to wait at the village for us.

### And The Tangential Tragedies Of War

That afternoon, we were preparing to leave Vinkovci when there was a serious accident less than 100 meters up the road. We were on the scene in seconds. Two dazed reporters stood outside their wrecked car. An exploding shell had caused another vehicle to swerve into theirs, they claimed. Neither of the occupants in the other car could confirm this. One man was dead. His female companion was unconscious. On the sidewalk, an old lady lay bleeding from a head injury.

As Ronnie and the driver helped with the casualties, Alan attempted to video the event. As always, I tried to detach myself from the reality of the situation as I concentrated on taking pictures. But how could I desensitize myself to the pleading stare of the old lady as I focused on her bloody face? And how could I fail to notice when another salvo of shells slammed into our street? The whole thing was insane.

A million miles from the King's Road, we at least had the option to leave

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whenever we wanted, and that moment was already overdue. Frenchy, who had again turned up, was also ready to go. When Alan proposed, "Let's get out of here," none of us argued.

*A former Royal Marine, Tony Rogers has covered most of the world's hot spots as a photojournalist; he is a frequent contributor to SOF.*

## BULLDOG

*Continued from page 37*

couldn't give Collier the team's exact location. But once again Degroff came to the rescue.

"Can he pick up a beacon off this PRC-90?" Degroff radioed.

"Sure," replied Collier, and the Blackhawks swooped right in on top of the Green Berets.

Not a shot was fired as the choppers took off and headed home to KKMC.

### Epilogue

CWO 2 Richard F. Balwanz was awarded this nation's second highest decoration for valor, the Silver Star. Every member of his team was awarded the Bronze Star with V-device.

The pilots of the two Blackhawks who came to rescue him were awarded Distinguished Flying Crosses. Their crew members were awarded Air Medals.

After getting a couple days of badly needed rest, Balwanz and his buddies were flown into Kuwait City where they helped other SF teams clear enemy bunkers and fighting positions of booby traps.

After the war, Balwanz was invited to accompany General Carl Steiner, head of the Army's Special Operations Command, to Washington where he told members of the Senate Armed Services Committee about the day he became the first warrant officer in Army history to lead men into combat.

*A frequent contributor, Dale B. Cooper covered the Gulf War on-site for SOF, and continues to record the events of that conflict. Last month, Cooper covered the incredible rescue of a similar SF special recon team compromised inside Iraq, and next issue he will begin a two-part chronicle of the air war.*

## TERRORISTS

*Continued from page 67*

dozens of strays in her home and was quite controversial locally. As for her home being a private animal shelter, there was no mention of her being licensed; only that she lived with dozens of animals in her

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home. The circumstances that led up to the incident could prove interesting under examination.

Item 3: The "assassination" of animal rights activist Jesse Haines in New York. I checked with New York newspapers through the CompuServe network and could not find any mention of a Jesse Haines.

Item 4: The murder and dismemberment of James Madden, a canvasser for Citizens for a Better Environment near Racine, Wisconsin. Rosemary Oliveira, administrative director for the Wisconsin group, stated in the Madison Capital Times that authorities told her the death was not believed related to the organization, but rather the random act of a psychopath.

Item 5: Karen Wakeland, whose kittens were killed and skinned and who was shot at. I did a computer search of Texas newspapers, but couldn't find anything.

Item 6: The attack on the Wing and Shot Hunting Club. This occurred on private land where men run their dogs; they don't allow trapping for that very reason.

Item 7: Marylou Sapone, described (along with Marc Mead) as an agent provocateur. Sapone was a deep cover investigator brought in by the district attorney to testify in the trial of Fran Trutt, the woman who planted a bomb at U.S. Surgical Corp. Far from being a drunk, Sapone seldom drinks and managed to rise to the highest levels of the animal rights movement within 18 months of penetrating the groups. The information she uncovered about the agendas and activities of the animal rights movement is the basis for continuing investigations by government agencies.

Sapone only met Merritt Clifton once (due to ongoing criminal investigations, the actual time and date of the meeting is still under wraps), and at that meeting Clifton and many other members of the animal rights groups were talking openly about their plans.

The testimony of Clifton and others wasn't believed by the jury, and Trutt plea-bargained the case to avoid a guilty verdict.

The rest of Clifton's letter is more nonsense. He used the term "agent provocateur" three times, trying to convince readers that terrorism activities of the animal rights movements are the acts of plants sent in by organizations and businesses. Clifton and other members of the animal rights movement have a lot to lose, as their organizations begin to come under the microscopes of various law enforcement agencies. People like Sapone are insuring that those agencies have the information needed to stop the animal rights movement before it holds our nation captive. ☒

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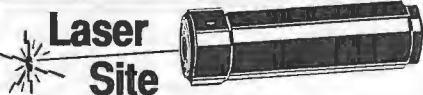
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## DRAGOON

Continued from page 45

the field, which especially for recon team members means a lot of living in the ground like an animal. It may not sound like attractive duty, but there is a real team spirit, and both men and officers try to stay with the regiment.

Strong emphasis is placed on rapid recognition and identification of weapons, vehicles and equipment of all NATO and ex-Warsaw Pact countries, and on employing sophisticated radio and cryptographic equipment and procedures. In the 13th, it is not enough to be up for making a jump and humping a ruck. You also have to be able to *think*. At least half the personnel are free-fall qualified, the highest in any airborne unit of the French army.

The 13th put eight teams of three men each, plus a command element of four men on the ground for Operation Desert Storm. Initially, they were assigned as liaison with the Coalition forces — American, Egyptian, Syrian, Saudi, Kuwaiti and Senegalese. Later, all but two of the teams (which were working with the U.S. Army's 82nd Airborne) went on to work reconnaissance missions. This included capturing 50 Iraqis during the action at As Salman on 26 February 1991, as well as their more usual (at least for the 13th) work of getting very far out, not being

seen, while observing and reporting.

*Eric Micheletti is editor in chief of the French military journal Raids. Colonel Alex McColl is SOF's contributing editor for military affairs.*

## FLAK

Continued from page 16

I worked with were simply not physically strong enough to perform many of the required tasks on jet engines. As a former shop chief put it, "they do not pack enough ass."

Many of them complained about working with the fuels and solvents, and avoided the messy jobs. Most often, the women were treated with kid gloves and assigned easier jobs.

Sgt. Sasser should be commended for telling it as he saw it, instead of how others want to hear it.

Stephen A. Russell  
Grissom AFB, Indiana

Praise the Lord and pass the ammunition — I mean condoms.

I was in a Patriot missile unit in Germany for two years, and we had one female that got pregnant every time we got ready to go to the field. This went on for about 1 1/2 years and

she never did have the kid.

We had one female that came to the unit pregnant after she got knocked up on leave after advanced infantry training.

And one unwed mother would bring her baby (less than 1 year old) in the barracks and leave it on workdays with someone who was off duty. Have you ever pulled 24-hour duty, come in to go to sleep in your nice dark room, only to be awakened by some screaming kid in a room down the hall?

Women want to be the equal of male soldiers, but they think they're entitled to special privileges.

Rick Hall  
Gulf Port, Mississippi

## IS JOHANN STONED? ...

I was disturbed by your January 1992 story, "California Dreaming — Is Oliver Stoned?" Johann W. Rush criticized Oliver Stone's *JFK*, and he would have us believe that Lee Harvey Oswald killed Kennedy alone. Rush is obviously a disinformation agent and/or a CIA dupe.

The American public deserves the assassination truth, and this obvious conspiracy has been covered up. The government is afraid to release all the records because the government was involved.

William D. Nueske  
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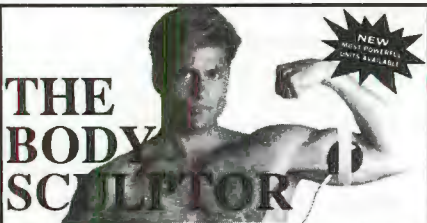


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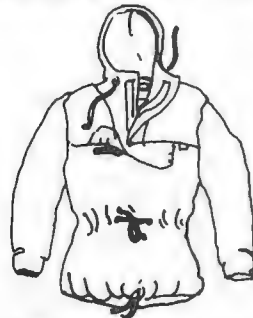
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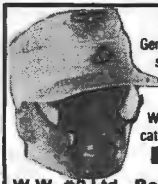
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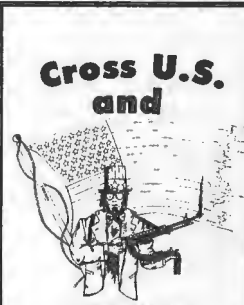
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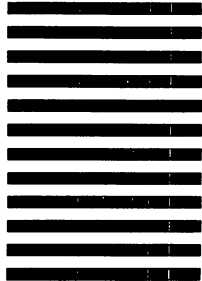




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